CELL LEADER'S MANUAL

**A GUIDE- AND REFERENCE- BOOK FOR CELL (SMALL)
GROUP LEADERS, PROSPECTIVE CELL LEADERS,
AND GENERAL YOUTH LEADERS**

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to
reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. [2 Tim 2:2.]

It is bold, almost foolhardy, to put half a dozen lives into the hands of a nineteen or twenty year old youth. Yet, this is exactly what we do in our cell groups.

Moreover, the people in the hands of our cell leaders are in training to become the leaders and thinkers who will guide the Caribbean well into the twenty-first century.

We only dare to do such a thing by standing on God's power and promises. For, he is able to make us "competent as ministers of a new covenant . . . of the Spirit." [2 Cor 3:5, 6.]

Such competence, however, does not come in one blazing, life-transforming moment of encounter with God: the twelve apostles (the prototype Christian cell group!) were not suddenly transformed at the Mount of Transfiguration, nor did they instantaneously become perfect at Pentecost. Rather, competence takes time, effort, training, diligent practice, and, to be honest, learning from our mistakes.

This is why Paul urged Timothy to find faithful men who would submit themselves to training, and pass on their heritage in God to yet others.

It is also the reason for, and the focus of, this manual. In it, we have tried to distil the lessons we have learned as we have worked with cells on campuses since their introduction in November 1977. (The cell group was originally introduced as a follow-up tool for the watershed Mona Campus Missions '77. They proved to be so successful that the cell became a permanent feature of the movement's strategy.)

As you use the manual as a text and reference book, then, we suggest that you first work through the Self-Test on Leadership, with a friend, to help you highlight the points you need to especially emphasise. Next, go through the three major sections, in order. (Refer to the Table of Contents for details.) The first, on cells, will help clarify the cell strategy. The second will help you develop Bible study skills, build your prayer life, and improve your ability to share the gospel. The third one will help you to grow as a Christian leader as you focus on the credibility of the Faith, on how to help those who are hurting, and on how to work with yourself and others to develop and implement effective plans. (Many of the issues are dealt with as Bible studies, so we urge you to work through the studies carefully, not just to read them.)

Finally, we ask you to diligently apply what you learn in your work, and to hand it on to those you lead. May God be with you as you work with those who embody the future.

Gordon,
Trials, Montserrat[1].
92:12:17.

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[1] This village was destroyed by the Soufriere Hills volcano, December 26th 1997.

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SUGGESTED TRAINING PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

The systematic training of cell leaders is critical to the long-term success of a cell initiative. Such a programme may be organised in any one of several ways.

For instance, towards the end of the academic year before potential cell leaders are to take up new responsibilities, an orientation session could be held to introduce and motivate the programme to participants, followed by a period of individual reflection and study over the summer. Then at the beginning of the new academic year, a weekend retreat and several workshop sessions could be held. After this, cells of cell leaders could be used for onward training and development, as well as a vehicle for co-ordination and mutual support.

A logical sequence of topics and session for such training, based on the contents of this manual, organised as a ten-session course[2], would be:

SESSION	TOPIC	MAIN ACTIVITIES/FOCUS
1	**INTRODUCTION**	▪ Vision and Challenge ▪ Leadership survey ▪ Personal study assignments
2	**Handling Cells**	▪ Cells and cell leadership ▪ Building disciples ▪ Managing challenges
3	**Bible Study**	▪ How the Bible works ▪ Group Bible Study: OIA principles, techniques & safeguards
4	**Personal Evangelism**	▪ Evangelising College students ▪ Training students in Personal Evangelism
5	**Fundamentals of the Faith**	▪ Gospel and truth: Gal. 1:1 – 8 ▪ Justification, Faith & salvation ▪ Responding to the sects
6	**Prayer**	▪ 1 John 5:14 – 15 & effective prayer ▪ Building the disciplines of prayer ▪ Prayer in cells
7	**Counselling Skills**	▪ 2 Cor 1:3 – 4 and counselling ▪ principles & techniques ▪ where to go from here
8	**Apologetics**	▪ The 1 Peter 3:15 challenge ▪ Thinking through the Faith ▪ Meeting contemporary challenges
9	**Planning and Management**	▪ Wisdom, guidance, planning & managing ▪ Principles, strategies & techniques ▪ Working with people in groups/teams
10	**The Fulness Vision Challenge**	▪ Eph 4:9 – 10, 11 – 16, 17 – 24 ▪ Working out the fulness challenge on the ground ▪ Commitment and prayer

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[2] Keyed to the major sections of this manual. The course could work across a term or semester, or a church quarter, using 90 – 120 minute sessions. It could also be organised as the sessions for a training workshop series or a retreat.

PRELIMINARY EXERCISE

Leadership Survey

Leadership is a critical component of success in any organisation. However, it is also extremely difficult to define it as a concept or to derive generally applicable principles — as the academic literature on organisations and leadership so clearly shows.

Happily, in studying Christian discipleship, we have a powerful example, Jesus: "And (Jesus) went up to the mountain and summoned those whom he himself wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them out . . . " (Mark 3:13, 14; NASB.) So, in the prototype Christian cell group, already we see the impact of leadership through relationship and example, biblical teaching and training, vision and life-transforming power through the Spirit.

That is, Christian leadership is visionary and transformational. Its focus is not that "I got what you want, so you give me what I want," but rather that through a vision from God worked out and exemplified in lives and relationships, faithful disciples can be moulded to carry on Jesus' work in the world. For, Jesus came, descending, serving, liberating, dying for our sins, rising and ascending "in order to fill all things." [Eph 4:9 – 10.]

It is in that context that he gave leaders to the church, to equip God's people for works of service, so that as God's people fill their lives with Christ's grace, liberation, healing, deliverance, transforming power and glory, the whole world would more and more be filled with Christ.

 Clearly, then, the quality of leadership we manifest will be decisive in carrying forward that process of filling all things with Christ.

Consequently, our first task is to clarify where we stand as leaders, through reflection on key leadership characteristics. So, this leadership training manual starts with a self-rated leadership survey, to which we should now turn.

(After you have completed the course, and again and again as you go out to lead, we invite you to return to it, to measure progress.)

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

"If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."
[1 Tim. 3:3.]

The Church has always needed capable, dedicated, exemplary and effective leaders. The problem is what makes a leader capable or effective.

The following test is an attempt to pin down some of the keys to effective leadership. Do it, prayerfully and honestly, with a good friend. Rate yourselves, and one another, compare, and discuss good points and poor points.

I. Rate yourself on the following scale: 1-poor; 2-mediocre; 3-fair; 4-good; 5-very good. Examine each quality, reflect on what it means, and give yourself a numerical score:

1. Initiative: the ability to act without having to be told what to do.   [   ]

2. Energy: the opposite of laziness, apathy, and putting off doing what needs to be done.   [   ]

3. Confidence: being sure of yourself and what you are trying to do, neither being crippled by fear nor foolhardy.   [   ]

4. Vision: the ability, given through God's insight, to see the possibilities in a situation and thus know how to act, so that God's power breaks into the situation to transform it for good .   [   ]

5. Clarity: being able to think, speak, and act without hesitation, ambiguity or confusion.   [   ]

6. Balance: the ability to see both sides of an issue, and to work out the best path in the light of both sides.   [   ]

7. Integrity: having convictions, and having the courage to live by them.   [   ]

8. Humility: being willing to surrender your rights, status, and privileges to serve, even in menial chores.   [   ]

9. Compassion: being open in your heart to the pains of the other man.   [   ]

10. Winsomeness: getting on well with other people: friendliness, tact, diplomacy and consideration.   [   ]

11. Teamwork: being able to work closely with others towards a common purpose.   [   ]

12. Planning ability: the ability to formulate clear goals, and to work out effective paths to attain them.   [   ]

13. Administrative ability: the ability to bind people , skills, money, time and plans together to achieve goals.   [   ]

14. Soundness: the ability to bring common sense to bear on confusing situations to make wise decisions.   [   ]

15. Biblical soundness and knowledge: having a comprehensive, correct and practical grasp of the Bible and its teachings.   [   ]

16. Spiritual maturity: leading a life of diligent service submitted to the Lordship of Christ, and marked by love, truth, power and holiness.   [   ]

II. Leaders work with people, whom they must help weld into a team, which must work to fulfill its task. As a result, leaders must balance themselves, the individuals, the team and the task.

   1. Examine the traits and skills listed. How do they contribute to the team, the task, and the person?

   2. How well would you perform as a leader?

   3. What are your strong and weak areas?

   4. What will you do about them?

   5. How? How soon?

PART ONE:
Working with Cells

The focus of this manual is leadership in cell or small groups, primarily those that aim to nurture disciples, though the skills and insights will also apply readily to ministry teams and evangelistic outreach/discussion groups, the other main types of cells.

Logically, the first focus is on the cell strategy, and on clarifying key issues, objectives and tasks. This is the focus of the first module, Handling a Cell Group. Given the importance and controversy surrounding it, the issue of spiritual gifts in cells will be addressed. The section rounds off with a Bible study on body life, suitable for use in a cell group to orient its members to Christian life and service.

It is expected that participants will read and discuss the first module. Gifts in cells can be studied with this module in one session, or separately, depending on circumstances. Cell leaders will also benefit if they do the Bible study together.

A very useful practical exercise would then be to plan a term or semester of meetings and activities for your cells, in light of what you have learned. Then, through regular meetings of the cells of cell leaders, implementation challenges can be raised and addressed. After the semester, it would be very useful to meet again to review what was studied, in light of concrete experience.

HANDLING A CELL GROUP

"And (Jesus) went up to the mountain and summoned those whom he himself wanted,
and they came to him. And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that
he might send them out . . . " (Mark 3:13, 14; NASB.)

When we chip off the sapwood, the heart of what Jesus did before he was crucified was to stake his Kingdom on a group of twelve very ordinary men.

Was he taking a mad gamble, risking all on one throw of the die, or did he know something so powerful that he could calmly leave his Kingdom in the hands of twelve -- no, eleven -- ordinary men?

1.   The Dynamo

Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He had in his hands a strategy that even with ordinary men could change the course of history. I believe it can do so in our cell groups.

The first point of the strategy is the power of example:

> Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.
> (Luke 6:39, 40: KJV and NIV.)

The blind can lead the blind -- straight into the nearest ditch. Men become just like their leaders and teachers. Example is the essence of teaching and leadership.

Jesus used this principle of example to build disciples. First, he challenged them to follow him: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt 16:24.) He lived with them, taught them, and set an example for them. Eventually, he could say "they are not of the world even as I am not of it. " (John 17:16.) Then, he sent them out under his authority and with the power of his Spirit to challenge and change the world.

Therefore, we also must be good guides and examples -- we must know where, and why, and how, we are going.

"But Jesus is the example -- not a mere man!"

Let's put it another way: "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." (1 John 2:6.) If there is anything at all in our lives that we cannot hold up as an example, we must get rid of it. Those who follow us will follow our example . . . even into the ditch.

We must be able to join Paul as he says "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you." (Phil. 3:17, cf. I Cor 11:1, I Pet. 5:2, 3)

We must see situations, people, and issues the way God sees them. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (I Sam 16:7.) We must therefore learn to listen to and obey God:

> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Consider carefully what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you and even more. Whoever has will be given more: whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. (Mark 4:23 - 25; cf. John 10:27, Prov. 3:5,6.)

If we fail to make full use of what God shows us, we will become blind leaders of the blind. Further, our own walk with God, built on the foundation of prayer, worship and practically-focussed Bible study, is the basis for building true vision, living lives of example, and effective service to Christ. Let us, therefore, "keep watch" over ourselves and those in our care -- for whose souls we will give an account to God (Heb 13:17), making sure to diligently obey the word of God which builds us up. (Acts 20:28 - 32; cf. 2 Tim 3:14 - 17 and John 17:17.)

2.   Body Life

The second dynamic in a cell group is body-life. The same Holy Spirit who transformed twelve ordinary men and changed the course of history forever is available to each of us:

> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good . . .
>
> [Jesus] gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . .
>
> The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. (1 Cor. 12:7, Eph. 4:11 - 16.)

We do not have to rely on our own ability. "Our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant . . . of the Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:5, 6) Further, God has called each Christian into a significant sphere of ministry, so that works of service are to be done by all of "God's people."

Our task as leaders, then, is to teach, guide, set examples, encourage, and regulate, so that there is freedom, flexibility, and growth, without disorder; "God is not a God of disorder but of peace." (1 Cor. 14:33a.)

We should therefore work to help each member blossom in his own relationship with God, in his relationships with the rest of the body, and in the unique ministry into which God has called him. When each member is fulfilling his or her role, the group and the wider body will grow in size, strength, truth, holiness, love and unity.

3. Group Dynamics

Cell groups are groups of people. The ordinary processes that go on in any group will thus affect their operation.

Groups come together around shared purposes in the face of a common situation. This association forces the members to work out relationships, roles, responsibilities, norms, goals, and tasks. Each person seeks to derive personal benefits - "What is this group doing for me? Is it what I want?"

Out of the interaction between the members, the tasks, and the team they form, a definite pattern of processes results:

1. Goals have to be worked out and pursued. This leads to planning, interacting, and working together.

2. Friction results from trying to interact, communicate, and cooperate. Conflicts break out between members, and inside the minds of members: "This is not what I really want! What will I do?"

3. Conflict is the key. Correctly handled, it builds both the individual and the team, providing much of the fuel for progress. Poorly handled, it will deeply wound the individual, and can shatter the group.

4. The best approach first admits that conflicts exist. It sees them as neutral, even beneficial. Even Jesus conflicted with his Father in Gethsemane. Second, it is willing to forgive hurts -- it only brings up problems to correct, encourage, and heal. It looks first for "the plank in your own eye," and only then will it speak to the other person. "Judge not, that you be not judged" speaks to just this point. Finally, it seeks to work out problems face to face - "just between the two of you." (Matt 7:1-5, 18:15-17; I Cor. 13:3-7; Gal. 6:1-5.)

5. The process of positive conflict resolution helps the group to grow and achieve its goals. Of course, resolving one conflict is no guarantee against the emergence of another.

6. Finally, no group is static. New people come in, and old ones go out. Projects are completed, and group wind up. We must learn to adjust and come to terms with success, failure, and goodbyes.

4. Programming

How can we best work to harness the power of example, group dynamics and the potential put in each of us by the Holy Spirit?

This problem was successfully tackled by the very first church:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41-47.)

Four factors stand out: sound biblical teaching, fellowship and mutual ministry, worship and prayer, and effective evangelism. These factors should clearly be present in our cell groups and ministry teams, and in our individual lives. But, what was the point?

Without a clear aim, we will get nowhere. That aim is quite simple:

[Jesus] said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you . . ."

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

He who descended [Christ] is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way.(Matt. 28:18,19; Titus 2:11-14; Eph 4:10, 1:22 - 23.)

Together, the texts tell us the goal of the church, and therefore of the cell group: a people, from all nations, who are the holy people of God, filling the world with the fulness of Christ. To this end, we reach out to men, to challenge them to follow Jesus as his disciples. Evangelism is a means, not the end.

Secondly, good programmes start with people where they are, and work to help them towards a definite objective, being rigorous in pursuit of excellence, yet compassionate. People are the point.

With this, we can state *three basic goals*:

1.   At the year's end, a cell member should be saved, know why, and know how to explain it from the Bible: there should be no doubt that Jesus is his Lord, or that the Bible is

authoritative. [He should therefore be able to study the Bible inductively, making forceful applications to his life, and to the issues of the day. Worship, prayer, and Bible study should be part of his daily life. He should be open and honest with both God and man.]

2.   He should see himself as called to serve God, under the Commission, and should be actively evangelizing and working to build up the body of Christ. He should be active in other aspects of the campus fellowship, and in a specific congregation.

3.   He should see his role as a student in terms of ministry while on campus and preparation for further ministry after he leaves. He should be willing to see and use his career as support for ministry. He should be willing to go into missionary work or other career ministry.

These objectives will require much work.   Typically, our cell member will not be really sure he is saved -- much less, being able to show why or help another find salvation from the Bible. He probably cannot study the Bible properly, and has a shaky prayer life. He is more likely to want, and need, ministry than to be active in ministering.

If that sounds strong, ask people things like "How does prayer (or, faith) work?", or "What is praise (or, worship)?" Discuss other things, too: what he really thinks about himself (self-image), family life, sex, handling time and money, handling problems. This will give a fuller picture, and help keep the cell group on target.

We must therefore work to build men and women of vision and power, people who are firmly grounded and whose aim in life is to build the Kingdom of God. We should stress personal growth and involvement, against the backdrop of discipleship, body dynamics, and group dynamics. Cell meetings should balance teaching, Bible study, sharing, and ministry by all members; worship and prayer, involvement in the wider campus fellowship and the wider church, and strong evangelistic activity. Outside of meetings we should learn to share with one another, pray for one another, visit, counsel, and so on. A cell group is far more than just a meeting.

5.   The Cell Meeting

The cell meeting, however, is the central feature of a cell group. It brings us together, to share, to minister, to study, to worship, and to reach out. It sets the tone and focus for the group.

Paul sums it up:

> When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. [1 Cor 14:26; cf. context and Heb 10:23 - 25.]

The key factors are focus and flow. Imagine a cafeteria, full of students eating and talking. Suddenly, there is a ghastly noise and a sudden scream in one corner.

Every head will turn, to see what is happening. There is now a focus. For a meeting to develop, it must begin to flow. For instance, the commotion could be the opening moments of a dramatic presentation.

Meetings, generally, develop a focus, and the focus must flow. The question is how the Holy Spirit wants to form a focus, and how it should flow in theme, time, space, and style. Flexibility, spontaneity and creativity are vital.

Too often, everything is "up front centre", and even our usual row by row layout shows it — performers and audience:

The focus of a circle can be anywhere on its circumference or in the middle, not just "up front centre". Circle-based layouts are thus open to wider interaction, are more personal - we can see one another's faces, and so are better fitted to true body ministry. Since a "U" layout has a natural focus at its open end, but allows a focus to form anywhere along its arc, it has the advantages of both row and circle layouts.

Time is vital. Meetings should start - and end - on time. The pace should neither drag along like a hearse nor race like a fire truck heading for a conflagration. Cut a slow item, and move on. Give people time for interaction and reflection, but don't waste time.

The key to focus, though, lies in the idea of "drawing near" - near to God and near to one another:

> Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus
> . . . and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near in
> full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty
> conscience . . . Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love
> and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit
> of doing, but let us encourage one another . . . [Heb 10: 19 - 25.]

Access to God has always been a problem for sinful man. Even though we can't hide from him, we cannot approach him, for we are defiled by sin. The elaborate ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Testament drove this point home, again and again. It is only by sin-free blood that sin can be removed, and it is only then that men, as forgiven sinners, may approach God.

By the guiltless blood of Jesus, shed on the Cross, we have access to God. Under the Old Covenant, only the High Priest, once a year -- and with a rope to pull out his body if God should strike him dead for unconfessed sin -- could go behind the Curtain into the Most Holy Place. In it, above the Ark of the Covenant, was a visible radiance -- the Shekinah Glory, God's visible manifestation of his presence in the Temple.

But now, we have free access to the immediate, manifested, intimate presence of God.

This is no mere fine point of Theology. Rather, it means we don't have to try to work up God's "presence" by singing, shouting, complex liturgy, or whatever. We boldly draw near to God, since our hearts have been sprinkled to purge our consciences of guilt. As we draw near, we "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." We approach God freely and gratefully, as forgiven sinners, forgiven because we put our trust in Christ. Praise His Name!

Let's pause to look at praise, worship, and thanksgiving. In the strict sense, they refer to different things. We thank God for what he has done or promised to do. We praise him for Who he is. We worship, falling down before him, literally or figuratively, as man before God, creature before Creator. Worship is the underlying attitude, which finds vocal, musical, or bodily expression. That is why speech, song, dance, raised hands, or bent knees can all be expressions of worship.

The second aspect is our drawing near to one another, before God. Christianity is not a solitary business - God calls us to be his people, his royal priesthood, his family, his house, his body. Even the command "be filled with the Spirit" is corporate: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph. 5:18-21.)

It is against this backdrop that the framework of Bible study, teaching, fellowship, body ministry, worship, and outreach take place. Prayer, in particular, is an aspect of worship — it acknowledges our dependence on God for our needs. Worship, then, deals with our drawing near to God. The other three foci deal with drawing near to one another under God.

The basic idea is that "we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." (I Cor. 10:16, 17). Our relationship with Jesus makes us one body - the inter-dependent body of Christ. That is why we must meet regularly to share, encourage, and build one another.

Outreach is the key point. We must be witnesses, in the power of the Spirit. We must reach out with the only really good news there is. It is our privilege, and duty.

Teaching and Bible study form the basis for everything else. We must understand what we experience, and experience what we understand. The focus must be inductive, probing the Bible's text to see what it actually says, asking questions to discover what it means, and seeing how it relates to real life. We must balance three emphases: dealing with God's advice for facing the problems, issues, and struggles of practical living; the fundamentals of discipleship -- how to lay a firm foundation, put down roots in God, and bear fruit; getting to know the Bible itself, so

that we both know what it teaches, and where and how it teaches -- basic knowledge of the Bible and its teaching.

If we fail to establish our cell members on a firm Biblical foundation, we have failed. Full stop. We must give the Bible priority in our ministry, and stress "seeing it for yourself from the Bible." Paul summed it up, beautifully:

> Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of . . . you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (II Tim. 3:14-17.)

Generally, cell meetings should first focus on God: worship. They can flow into interaction, sharing, and body ministry by the members. The study and teaching element should not be confined to a slot for "the word". Let it pervade the whole as well -- it's natural to give explanations as we go along. A good explanation can really ignite times of worship, prayer, or sharing and ministry.

But don't be afraid to break the mould. Hold a planning and evaluation session. It's great leadership training, and will improve the meetings. Go out to a play, or to dinner. Watch a video. Go fishing. Sponsor an ice cream lime. Be flexible and creative.

6.   Building Disciples

After all is said and done about programming and cell meetings, our cell groups will be judged by one sharp question: "have they built effective disciples?" Disciples are the point.

First, we must focus on laying a firm foundation: a disciple must be saved and know why. Jesus must be his Lord. He must see and use the Bible as his basis for thinking and living, especially principles such as repentance and faith, holiness and the power of the Spirit. He must know the principle of ministry: God working with him and through him. He must live as a steward who will give account to God, his Judge. (See Heb. 6:1, 2 for "Foundations.")

A disciple must have firm roots in his relationships with Jesus, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the body of Christ. All spiritual sustenance comes through these relationships. His devotional life, therefore, must be rich and practical - he must spend time with God in worship, and learn how to listen to him as he speaks (John 10:27). Fellowship, encouragement, and body ministry must be integral to his life.

It is only then that a disciple will be able to face hardship successfully.   Hardships are inevitable. A disciple must be ready for them, so that they will build him, training him in godliness.   "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruits of righteousness." (Heb. 12:11, cf. John 15:1-8; James 1:2-4).

Out of our own hardships comes ministry, because God "comforts us in all our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (II Cor. 1:4). Moreover, "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (I Cor. 12:7). Effective disciples must learn how to help others turn to and grow in God, and must see themselves as called to be ministers in the body of Christ. They must fulfill their callings.

There are many other things - planning, administration, apologetics, preparing and presenting talks, leading inductive Bible studies, and so on, but these can be picked up along the way as they become necessary. Bluntly, effective disciples are people who learn to read and think for themselves. They must become independent -- able to teach and fend for themselves. The central issues in a cell group must be foundations, rooting relationships, and ministry.

The problem is that many young Christians do not see these things as vital, and that people come into a cell group at different levels and have varying interests and, consequently, grow at different rates. The rates vary from zero to very rapid.

The trick is to balance what you do. By taking an input from the members, and by getting feedback from them, we can keep the general focus of cell meetings, personal visits, prayer, and so on relevant and interesting. Quite often, the underlying factors that cause the problems our members face lie in the three central stresses. If we dig for the roots and bring out the links, our focus on these issues will make sense to our members, and, because of the stress on solving practical problems, will be relevant, practical and effective.

"But people will think I'm nosy, trying to stick my nose into other people's business."

That's the catch. Unless we lead the way, setting an example of openness and honesty, we will simply stir up hostility. People, justly, resent nosiness. If, however, they see that you, too, are open, serious, and honest, even about shady things, and understand why it is necessary to be open, it will make all the difference.

In short, the key to building disciples is good relationships. By building openness into the cell group, you lay a basis of trust, caring, and sharing. Individuals will respond at different levels. Don't force them . Some are not ready to take off yet. Use personal visits to build on the basis of the meetings. Encourage those who are ready to take off - hand over some leadership responsibility to them. Give them some extra training.   In fact, in the situation above, if someone knows what you are doing, and is prepared, it can really make a difference . . .

(That's why having a co-leader can make a big difference.)

What we must keep in the back of our minds is balance.

We must balance dealing with people where they are, and the need to take them through a definite programme of training in discipleship. A good objective is to leave behind you at least two people who are ready to take over the cell group at the end of the year.

7.   Odds and Ends

There are all sorts of other things that could be said. Here are some things that deal with likely problems and issues. You think of more.

a) The First Meeting: A job that's been started right is half done. The first few meetings should serve as a gentle introduction to cell group life, and set the tone for the whole year. Focus on getting to know one another and on laying a basis for the relationships, tasks, and goals that will be the group's focus for the year.

b) Working With a Co-leader: In many cell groups, leadership is shared. It is vital for you to meet regularly to discuss, plan, share, and pray. A good rule is that you must seek a consensus about everything you do with the cell group. Share up leadership responsibilities by mutual agreement. Work together.

c) Taking Charge: Don't be afraid to lead the group. It is your responsibility before God. The point about authority isn't that you have to start everything or do the whole job. The point is that you coordinate and enforce the rules and standards of the group. Establish the standards from the Bible and fearlessly enforce them.

d) Older Members: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."
 (I Tim. 4:12.) It helps to seek advice from older or more mature members, and to give them some responsibilities, but you must not allow age or "maturity" to become an excuse for undermining your importance as the appointed leader. Do try to work closely with such members -- they have much to contribute.

e) Lateness and Irregular Attendance: The truth is, we do what we see as important. We tend to ignore or forget what's unimportant to us. Make sure the cell group meetings are relevant, lively and speak to the burning issues. Involve all the members, actively. Don't have "just another (boring) religious meeting." Start on time, and finish on time. Point out that being late is actually very arrogant, and start on time with whoever is there. . . the others will get the point. Remind people.

f) Doctrinal Clashes: Establish that the Bible is the basis for what we believe and do. Teach the principles of inductive Bible Study. Develop the attitude of being willing to follow wherever the Bible leads. Most problems come from ignoring or misreading the Bible, so get people to look at the Bible itself, carefully. If the point is side-tracking a meeting, stop it, sum up the sides, put it off for a future meeting, and get back on track. Research the point, and deal with people one on one, as much as possible. Keep your promise to deal with it in a future meeting.

g) Inviting New People: Encourage the practice. Lead by example.

You think of others. How should you deal with them?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1.   Why is the example set by how a leader lives such a powerful influence on those who follow him or her?

2.   In what ways can you improve the quality of the example you set? (What does it mean to be "blind"?)

3.   What do you think of when you hear terms such as "the body of Christ" or "the church"? How well do your impressions fit in with scriptures such as Acts 2:41-47; I Cor. 10:16,17; 12:7-12; Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:11-16? How do these relate to a cell group, or a drama group, or an outreach committee?

4.   Think of some group situations you have been in - family, church, cell group, whatever. Do the group processes outlined above help to explain what happened?

5.   If you were in a conflict situation in a group, how would you respond? What do you think would be the most effective way to act?

6.   Think of some meetings you have attended. Do the principles outlined in the paper correctly explain what happens in meetings? How could these meetings have been more effective and fulfilling? How would you, therefore, plan a cell group meeting?

7.   Someone starts attending your cell meetings about half way through Christmas term. She is not a Christian, but keeps on attending. She becomes a Christian over the Christmas holidays. How will you work with her to help her become established and grow up as a solid disciple?

APPENDIX:
HANDLING GIFTS IN CELL GROUPS

In many cell groups on campus, we have people with a charismatic or Pentecostal flavour, and also people who do not have such a background. This calls for us to carefully address the question of how we should deal with the unfortunately controversial question of spiritual gifts.

The basic validity of gifts is no longer a problem - a broad consensus is building up that accepts them. (See for instance Hummel's *Filled with the Spirit* or Mallone's *Those Controversial Gifts*, both IVP.) In simple terms, the purpose of gifts -- manifestations of the Holy Spirit through believers to build up the church -- is clearly not fulfilled until the church is complete when Christ returns. Nor is the history of the church kind to those who argue that gifts ceased after the Apostles and those they worked with died out! The real question today is how gifts should be handled.

Much of the problem is a matter of style: "thus saith the Lord . . ." has a quite different flavour from "I believe the Lord may be saying . . . to us" — especially when what is said is backed up by an appropriate biblical reference. For, the latter is more open to being weighed and tested. As a rule, this is wiser, as "prophesyings" (just like "preachings" and "teachings") are neither to be rejected out of hand nor accepted without testing based on the Bible. (1 Thess. 5:19 - 22; Isaiah 8:19, 20; Amos 3:7, 8; Rom 12:3 - 6; 1Cor 14:24, 25, 29 - 33.)

Many issues can be resolved in this way. Once we accept gifts as the manifestation of the Spirit given to and through each of us "for the common good", then we can take into account the background and exposure of each of us as we work together in love to build up one another. Surely, the point is to build up, not to unnecessarily antagonise! (See 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 14-26).

The scriptures are quite clear, too, that manifestations involve a working of God through man, and that how a person works a gift out is subject to that person's own control. This is why one can refrain from speaking in tongues where this is wise (1 Cor. 14:27, 28), and why Paul said, "the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets" (v. 32). We must be wise, gentle, sensitive and winsome.

A far larger problem, however, is the lack of such manifestations in our lives, not disorder or antagonism. Bluntly, the Church is the body of Christ, and we are its limbs and arms. If we refuse to function, it will not grow as it should, due to our disobedience.

It is not that the gifts are not given. It is that we fail to see ourselves as the ministers in the church, the limbs and organs of the body of Christ. As Paul puts it, leaders were given "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . . the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Eph. 4:12, 16).

Every Christian is called to work in some aspect of the ministry of the Church. When we work together, the Church will grow and develop, reflecting our Head. The cell group, in fact, is the ideal place for us to begin to explore and grow in this pattern of mutual support and service.

In cells, we must therefore first properly understand what gifts are, and how they work in practical contexts. The Bible says that prophecy is a gift, but so is administrative ability. Some manifestations are spectacularly supernatural; others are not. The key is that each is an endowment, an expression, a work of the Holy Spirit through us.

For, God is at work, through us — his cracked pots [see 2 Cor. 4:7!] — transcending mere skills, talents or hunches. Thus, it is the Divine element that is crucial, as our God powerfully manifests Himself among us to convict of sin, save, heal, reveal the secrets of men's hearts, transform lives and do wonders as he works to fill all things with Christ. [1 Cor 14:24 – 29; Eph. 4:9 – 16, cf. 1:9 – 10, 17 – 23.]

"But how do gifts fit in?"

They were there all along. As we work with God, consciously opening ourselves to his guidance and power, he will act. Quiet insights give us wisdom that comes from God, not man. A song or scripture comes to mind and transforms a "dead as dust" meeting into one that reaches into hearts with God's healing and glory. We feel an impression to speak about a particular problem and it's just what someone needs. The list could go on and on, but the picture is clear.

They have names: words of wisdom, revelations, words of knowledge, prophecies, and so on. While it is important to understand what such terms mean, it is more important to keep the main point in view: gifts are manifestations of God which work into practical, concrete settings, through ordinary Christians, to build up the Church.

God wants to act through each of us. As we open ourselves to him, we will learn to recognize his leading. At first, God deals with the basics, speaking to us to correct, encourage and guide. As we obey, he moves on. The key is to obediently listen. What God says often hurts, but always, it is to heal and to build. It is Satan who lures us with pleasant lies leading to pain later on, not God. God deals with truth and honesty. Ninety percent of the problems with gifts in the church, judging from Paul's rebukes to the Corinthians, come from a lack of honesty, love and obedience. It's no good to expect God to show us step three when we are not obeying Him by taking step one yet!

Character first, then Ministry. God's priority is plain.

Gifts, then, have a clear and vital role in our cell groups. Paul himself placed them in the context of meetings: "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the Church." (I Cor. 14:26.) These words are especially apt for cell meetings -- where else can everyone contribute in a given meeting?

Of course, gifts must be regulated. "Prophecies" must be tested against the Scriptures: they fall under the authority of the Bible, not in addition to it! Tongues, Paul requires, are such that only "two or at the most three should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church (assembly) and speak to himself and God" (I Cor. 14:27, 28). Prophecies are to be tested and the good held onto. (I Thess. 5:19-22). Similar things hold for all gifts. Study the relevant passages.

The gifts also have other uses, especially in prayer, planning and counselling. The key is close and open relationships, which all members give to and receive from one another.

There is, in short, tremendous potential for gifts in our cell groups. We must however, use them wisely, winsomely, and biblically.

BODY MINISTRY

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully
administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as
one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the
strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."
(I Peter 4:10,11.)

In an odd way, we already know about Body Ministry. For instance, we all know we are
supposed to bear witness to Jesus, love, care for, and support, one another, and to pray.

Why then this study? Another question will help. How consistently and effectively are you
testifying, praying for others, and so on? (Do you find yourself saying "I know I should but . .
."?) To know "what" we should do is one thing. To know "how", and "where", and "when" is
another. What we will do, then is to work through some key points, discuss our responses and
see how, together as a cell group, we can go forward.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Work through this study, section by section.
2. Pause after each section to discuss, note down, and pray.

I.   We are all the ministers of the Church

Read Ephesians 4:11-16. Jesus gave leaders to the Church "to prepare God's people for works of
service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... From him, the whole body, joined and held
together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its
work".

1.   "Works of Service" can be translated "works of ministry".
        When you think of "ministry", what pictures come to mind?

2.   How do your pictures relate to what Paul wrote in the above
        passage?

3.   How would you relate this Body Ministry to
        a) Our cell group?
        b) UCCF?
        c) Church, generally?

II.   Each of us has his own special area of service

Paul used the human body to explain how ministry works in the Church. Each part of our bodies, though made of the same bone, muscle, nerves and such like, is shaped for its own job. ("If your nose runs, and your feet smell, you're built upside down!").

      1.   What is it then, that gives each of us a unique role?
           (Hint, examine I Cor. 12:7-11, 29-31; II Cor. 1:3,4)

One way to look at Christian service is to see God as calling each of us to serve him in a way fitted to our personality, experiences, and talents. He equips us with gifts to fulfil our calls, and puts us all together so that we can help one another.

      2.   Do you believe God has called you to serve him, and do you
           know in what area?

III.   Ministry springs from our relationship with Jesus

Skim Mat. 7:15-20 and John 15:1-8. Fruit grow out of our relationship with Jesus. (The results of our service are simply a kind of fruit; fruits are visible results or products.)

      1.   In what way does the quality of our relationship with Jesus affect
           the quality of the results of our service? (cf. Luke 6:39, 40)

      2.   Take a hard, honest look at how close you are to Jesus Christ.
           What kind of fruit should you expect? (What should you do?
           How will you do it?)

IV.   Effective service arises from eager obedience and thorough preparation

Paul sets us an example. As soon as he was baptized, he was powerfully arguing for the gospel. (Acts 9:20-22).

After he had returned home to Tarsus for some time, Barnabas could ask him to help in teaching the disciples in Antioch (11:25-26). When the time came for God to send him out as an apostle, he was fully ready (13:1-4). He made sure to prepare himself and seized opportunities when they came.

      1.   What opportunities for service have you seen in this cell group, in
           UCCF, on campus, in the congregation, or town, or neighbourhood?

      2.   Did you seize them?

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he advised him about how to prepare for service: Bible-based study, and Bible-based practical training and obedience. (II Tim. 2:15, 3:14-17).

      3.   How much Bible-based study have you worked out in your life and service?

V.   Responses

      1.   What have I learned?
      2.   What has challenged me?
      3.   What action steps will I take?
      4.   In what areas does God want my service? In what ways?

PART TWO:
Basic Disciple-Making Skills

The art of preparing and leading group Bible studies is central to the work of a cell leader. Therefore, this section begins with a module that addresses this task. It is intended that leaders in training should work through the module, and make reference to the appendices; which are designed to supply exemplars and a rich array of powerful texts and topics for Bible study.

Personal evangelism is also at the heart of the life of a cell, so the next module is a Bible study-based course in personal evangelism. If cell leaders in training have not done such a course previously, they should do it over several sessions (preferably spaced a week apart). They should then work through the paper on Evangelisation of College students, and should discuss the relevant strategic issues.

The section next addresses theological concerns relating to the nature of salvation by faith, through another Bible study. (These concerns have especially been informed by the movement's experience with the International Churches of Christ, in particular the Kingston Church of Christ, and associated issues relating to baptismal regeneration.)

The key discipline of prayer is addressed, again through a Bible study. It is highly recommended that leaders in training work through this study together, to help build consistency and balance in this vital spiritual discipline.

Since Cell leaders face the task of helping people with challenges in their lives, it is appropriate to round out this section with a unit on counselling.

HELP IN PREPARING AND LEADING GROUP BIBLE STUDIES

It is all too easy to get lost in Bible study, lost somewhere between stories about men long since dust and dusty tomes claiming to "help" us. So let us note the key point first of all:

> The events recorded in the Bible happened to real people in real life.

Our aim, therefore, is to discover how God helped them in their situations, and how this speaks to us in our own situations.   (N.B. "tome" is an old, dusty word for old, dusty books).

1.   How the Bible Works

The Bible:

TEACHES	-- tells and explains the truth[3];
REBUKES	-- points out and disapproves wrong;
CORRECTS	-- helps us change from wrong to right;
TRAINS	-- helps us develop the skills, attitudes and habits of righteousness.

(All of this helps us grow in God. See II Tim. 3:16,17.)

Truth demands action -- we must "hear and do" (James 1:22-26).

We need to hear the truth from God because we are not living it and it is truth that sets us free (John 8:31-36). When God through his Word, points out our wrong and works to correct us, it hurts. If we don't listen and obey, it will hurt even more.

2.   Why Group Bible Studies?

If you really believe something, you will live it. In order to believe it, we have to first see it for ourselves. Group Bible studies help us discover the truths of God's Word for ourselves; they bring together different people with different ways of seeing things, thus enriching individual insights.

3.   How?

Our approach is INDUCTIVE, using questions to probe the Bible and relate it to our own lives. (Induction is the approach to issues which examines facts by asking who, what, where, when, and why and how questions.) From this, we draw out conclusions and can use them to solve

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[3] See the Apologetics Primer below for a discussion of issues related to truth, the reasonableness of faith, and the reliability of the Bible.

problems. Our questions should be short, clear and specific. They should relate to the passage, forcing us to think and take a closer look at the passage than usual. They should progress from looking at facts, to working out what they mean, to how they should affect how we live:

1. **OBSERVE FACTS**   -- what does the text say?
                             -- who are involved?
                             -- what happens: events, issues, conflicts, and their resolution.
                             -- where and when (backdrop) -- culture, geography, history, specific setting?
                             -- what points are stressed, conclusions are drawn, examples are set before us (to emulate or to avoid!)?
                             -- how is language used - poetry, prose, figures of speech, illustrations, etc.?

2. **INTERPRET MEANINGS**   -- what does the text intend to communicate?
                             -- how do events unfold, people interact, issues come out, conclusions arise?
                             -- what is significant or stressed in what happens or is said - major events, key words or ideas, important experiences? Why?
                             -- what is implied by what happens or is said?
                             -- how does context, both immediate and that of the whole Bible, affect the text?
                             -- what did the writer intend his original readers to understand? (Did he have us in mind? Did God?)

3. **APPLY RESULTS**   -- what points, events, or experiences speak from the biblical setting into our own?
                             -- how should we respond? [Truths to learn and live; mistakes or sins to avoid or turn from; corrections, restitutions, confessions, reconciliations to make; instructions to be put into practice; promises to claim and conditions to meet (cf. 2 Peter 1:2 - 4).]
                             -- where, when, with whom?

4. **Specific Types of Group Bible Studies**

Bible studies focus on a specific theme or on a specific text. Since a theme can only be studied by examining texts which relate to it, we will stress techniques for the study of texts in this primer.

        OIA   -- uses questions to bring out observations (O), interpretations (I) and applications (A).

	-- when presenting the study, mix O and I at first, then move on to A questions.
Swedish Technique	-- useful for both group and individual study.
	-- first read the passage, marking new insights with a candle; challenges or what pricks our consciences with an arrow; and what we do not understand or do not agree with, with a question mark. (Use a pencil, or if you don't want to mark up your Bible, use a sheet of paper with three columns.)
	-- Share with one another about what you have marked.
Panel of "Experts"	-- think of some questions relating to an important issue music, sex, racism, the environment, why Christians are afraid to witness; whatever.
	-- Empanel some "experts" and choose a moderator, using members of the group.
	-- Discuss questions and typical answers in the light of what the Bible has to say on the subject. (Some preliminary research is, of course, necessary.)

..........You think of some more ideas...........

5.   PROTECTIVE FENCES

"You can make the Bible say anything!"

Have you ever been hit with that one and stopped cold? Can you pick up when an alleged interpretation of the Bible is 'off', and tell why?

Hundreds of years ago, the Protestant Reformers worked out some principles which serve to guide us in interpretation, and as fences to keep us on safe ground:

1.   **The Scriptures Alone:** Nothing else is to be held on par with the Bible, whether in principle or in practice. The Bible is God's written word, and is the basis for what we believe and how we should live. (2 Tim. 3:14 - 17, Deut 17: 18 - 20, and Joshua 1:1 - 9.)

2.   **Scripture Clarifies Scripture:** Let the Bible interpret itself - scriptures throw light upon one another, and God does not contradict himself.

3.   **Take the Natural Sense Seriously:** Read the words in their context. If the natural meaning makes sense, do not look for 'hidden' meanings. Read poetry as poetry, and prose as prose. Figures of speech are figures of speech. Respect words, language, and logic.

4.   Be Open to Further Light from Scripture: We all make mistakes, so we must be open to correction.

5.   Weigh Facts of Grammar, Language, Culture and History Carefully: These facts can really help us clarify meanings, but sometimes, claimed 'facts' are not true. Check such claims with reputable sources and authorities. (Also, authenticate authorities, and remember that they too can make mistakes.)

6.   Bible Helps

Over the years, scholars have developed tools which can really help us:

a) Concordances   -- list where the Bible uses particular words. Strong's and Young's are the best.

b) Bible Dictionaries   -- discuss themes, names, words, concepts and much more. "The New Bible Dictionary," IVP, is quite good.

c) Study Guides   -- give outlines for studies on particular books of the Bible, or themes in the Bible. Scripture Union puts out some good ones.

d) Commentaries   -- comment on the Bible, or its books, section by section. Devotional ones are more personal, and Interpreter's commentaries are more technical.

e) Bible Atlases   -- give the geography of the lands in which the events in the Bible happened.

7.   Presenting the Study

1.   Start with prayer. (1 Cor. 2:9-12.)

2.   Read the passage.

3.   Use an introduction to set the tone - why this study, how we'll approach it, what we hope to gain by doing it.

4.   Probe the passage, using a well chosen method such as those outlined above.

5.   Guide discussion - but don't do all the talking.

6. Let the group answer the questions asked -- if you answer, it stops others from sharing and actively interacting with the text.

7. Learn to ask questions such as 'Could there be anything else?' and 'Could there be another way of seeing it?'

8. Let the group correct itself by probing the text more closely and examining alternatives.

9. Be prepared to learn from the group.

10. If there is something that stumps everyone, note it down and promise to research it for 'next time'. Move on. (Keep your promise.)

11. Control time. Make brief summaries and move on, especially if the study is going off on a tangent or bogging down. (What is a reasonable time for the study? For its major sections?)

12. Make sure the group members have come to clear conclusions and have specific action steps to take. (Sometimes, you can use a personal visit to pick up on this point.)

13. The main issue is what we grasp and live, not that "we finished the study." If necessary, finish the study another time.

14. Evaluate. What happened? How, why? What went well? Poorly? What follow-up actions (for yourself and with the members) should be taken?

15. Take time.

8.   Some Practical Work

"I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand."

1. Prepare a Bible study on 2 Timothy 3:14 -17. This will rivet the power of the Bible in your mind.

2. Learn to use a concordance, a Bible Dictionary, and a topical list.

3. Begin your own programme of Bible readings, if you have not yet done so. This is the best way to learn the Bible, and knowing is the best basis for preparing effective Bible studies - and for successful discipleship. Daily Bread, Scripture Union is helpful.

4. Read good books on Bible study. R.C. Sproul's "Knowing Scripture", IVP, is excellent.

5. Develop a term plan for Bible studies in your group. Put it into effect.

APPENDIX I: An Exemplary Study

HOW TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

Read 2 Peter 1:1-15.

To whom did Peter write? Does this include us? How could we know?

This letter is Peter's 'Last Will and Testament'. He was very concerned that Christians should focus attention on the most important issues, and so remain firmly anchored in Christ.

1.   'Knowing God' was important to Peter. What are the benefits of knowing God, according to the passage?

2.   How is knowing God different from knowing about Him? (Hint: what is the difference between knowing your mother and knowing about her?)

3.   In this light, how does Jesus make 'His divine power' available to us, and how can we best use this power?

4.   Peter stresses God's promises. Where do we find God's promises? How, then, should we seek to find them and put them to work in our lives?

5.   List three major promises of God. How can we reap their benefits?

6.   What are the things Peter wants us to 'add to our faith'? Why?

7.   Compare this list with Galatians 5:22-23, and read Romans 5:1-5. How can these qualities be built up in our lives?

8.   What happens if we fail to build up these qualities? How can we avoid this?

9.   If we have put our faith in Jesus, can we afford to rest on our laurels? Why or why not?

10.   What action steps should we take? How, and how soon?

APPENDIX II: USEFUL TOPICS AND TEXTS

The following are some suggested topics and texts for Bible studies, under four headings:
Discipleship - Related Themes; Some Great Passages in the Bible; Books to Study, and;
Fundamental Doctrines.

We urge that you prepare studies beforehand, using the inductive approach, and that cell
members be given preparatory work: passages to read and questions to ponder and jot down
responses to.

Please note the following:

1.   All cells should do the studies "Personal Evangelism", "Prayer", and "Body Ministry",
        which are in this manual.

2.   All cell members should be introduced to the rudiments of inductive Bible study, and be
        encouraged to use this approach in both personal and group Bible study.

3.   "Handling a Cell Group" outlines the basis for the cell strategy. Please consult it before
        selecting topics for study in your cell.

4.   The topics and texts are suggestions. Make your own choices. (No more than three or
        four main texts per study, please!)

5.   R. A. Torrey's What the Bible Teaches, or a study Bible such as the Thompson Chain
        Reference Bible are useful further sources.

6.   We urge that the NIV be used as a "standard" version, as it is an excellent, widely
        available and generally non-controversial translation in modern English. (All too few can
        decipher the KJV nowadays. And, to assert that *Textus Receptus* — the manuscript
        family from which it derives — is a gold standard by which other translations should be
        judged is at best a debatable claim.)

 I.   **BASIC DISCIPLESHIP - RELATED THEMES:**

1.   **THE GOSPEL:**
         Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12; John 3:14 - 21; Acts 10:38-48 , 11:11-18, 15:5-11; and Ephesians
        1:11-14. (These texts clarify how and when we are forgiven.)

 2.   **FOUNDATIONS:**
        Heb. 5:12 - 6:2. Also, 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:1-11.

        a)   **Repentance:** Isa. 55:1-13; John 4:1-42; Acts 9:1-22, 22:1-21, 26:12-23; Acts
                17:16-34; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:13. Check Rev. 2:1 - 3:22.

b)   **Faith:** Rom. 4:1-8, 4:18 - 5:2; Rom. 9:30 - 10:17; Heb. 11:1-6. Examine Rom. 1:16, 17 and Heb. 10:26-39, with James 1:16-25.

c)   **Baptisms:**   (John's) Matt. 3:7-17; Luke 3:7-14; John 1:19-34; Acts 18:24 - 19:7. (Water)   Matt. 28:28-20; Rom. 6:1-7, note 4:18 - 5:2 for "we"; 1 Cor. 10:1-11; Col. 2:11-12. (Spirit)   John 1:29-34, 7:37-39; Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-4,16-21,31-39, 8: 14-20, 9:17, 10:43-48, 11:15-18, 19:1-6; 1 Cor. 10:1-11, 12:13.

d)   **Laying on of Hands:** Gen. 48:13-22 and Heb. 11:21; Leviticus 1:2-4 and Heb. 10:1-18. Numbers 8:10-11, 27:18-21, and Deuteronomy 34:9. See Acts 6:1-6, 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6. Mark 10:16, 16:18; Luke 4:40; Acts 28:18. Acts 8:14-20, 9:17, 19:4-6, but also 10:43 - 48.

e)   **Resurrection and Eternal Judgement:** Ecclesiastes 12:6-7; Heb. 9:27. 1 Cor.15:21-25; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Thess. 4:13 - 5:11; Rev. 20:1-15. John 3:16-21, 35, 36, 5:22-30; Acts 17:30-31; 1 Cor. 3:10 - 4:5. Read 1 Cor. 15:1-58.

3.   THE BIBLE, OR, THE WORD OF GOD:

2 Tim. 3:14-17; James 1:16-25; 2 Peter 1:2-4. See Deut. 8:1-5. Deut. 17:18-20; Joshua 1:1-9; Psalm 1:1-6; Matt. 7:24-27; Mark 4:1-20. Read Psalm 19, 119.

4.   THE MANDATE OF THE CHURCH:

Matt. 28:18-20 and Titus 2:11-14. See Acts 1:4-8, 2:16-21, 31-39; Rom. 1:1-5, 14-20; 2 Cor. 5:11-21; Eph. 1:17 - 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:2 and Eph. 4:11-16. Note Micah 6:8; James 1:26, 27.

5.   BODY LIFE, OR, CHURCH LIFE:

Acts 2:32-47, 4:32-35; Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 12:12 - 14:1;
2 Cor. 1:3-7; Eph. 4:1-16; Phil. 2:1-11; Heb. 10:19-25. Read 1 Cor. 12 - 14.

6.   COMMITMENT:

Matt. 6:19-34, 10:32-39, 16:13-28; Luke 14:25-35, 17:7-10;
John 6:60-71; Rom. 6:1-23; 1 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1; Col. 3:1 - 4:6; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Heb.12:1-17; 1 Peter 1:13 - 2:3; Rev. 12: 10-11.

7.   HANDLING DIFFERENCES:

1 Cor. 13:1-7; Matt. 5:21-26, 7:1-5, 18:15-17; Rom. 14:1 - 15:7;
1 Cor.1:10-17; Gal.6:1-5; Eph. 4:20-32; Phil. 2:1-11; James 3:1 -4:12 and Acts 15:1-22.

8.   PRUNINGS, TRIALS, HARDSHIPS:

John 15:1-7; 2 Cor. 1:3-7; Heb.12:1-13; James1:2-12; 1 Peter 2:18-25, 4;12-19.

9. **STRUGGLES WITH SIN:**
Rom. 6:1 - 8:17 (an overview);   Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 6:12-20, 10:1-13, 13:1-7; 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1; Gal. 5:13 - 6:10; Eph. 4:17 - 5:21; Phil. 2:1-18, 3:12 - 4:1; Col. 3:1 - 4:6; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Titus 2:1 - 3:11; James 1:16 - 2:26 and 2 Tim. 3:14-17 and Psalm 119:1-16, 33-40, 105-120, 129-136; 2 Peter 1:13 - 2:12 Heb. 4:12-16 and Luke 4:1-13; 1 John 1:1 - 2:6.

10. **PRAISE AND WORSHIP:**
Psalms 47, 63, 86, 91, 95, 100, 108, 130, 143, 148, 149, 150;
Rev. 1:4-7, 4:1-11, 5:8-14, 19:4-10.

11. **FAMILY AND SEX:**
Gen.2:18-25, 18:18-20 and Prov. 1:1-19, 5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27,
31:10-31; Song of Solomon 1:1 - 8:14; Matt. 5:27-32 and 1 Tim.5:1-2; Eph. 5:22 - 6:4.

12. **CIVIC DUTIES:**
Rom. 13:1-7 and Acts5:27-42, with Matt. 22:15-22; 1 Tim. 2:1-2;
Philemon 1-25 (Onesimus was an escaped slave belonging to Philemon); Prov. 14:34;
Micah 6:8 - 7:7; James 1:26 - 2:13 and 5:1-6. Note Leviticus 19:15.

II.   SOME GREAT PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE

1.   Matthew 5 - 7. The Sermon on the Mount.

2.   Romans 1:16 - 5:2. The Gospel.

3.   1 Corinthians 12-14. The Body of Christ.

4.   Ephesians 4:1-16. The Body of Christ.

5.   Ephesians 1:15-23. The Destiny of the Church.

6.   1 Corinthians 13. The Love Chapter.

7.   Hebrews 11-12. The Life of Faith and its Culmination.

8.   Romans 8. Life in the Spirit.

9.   Matthew 24. Signs of the End.

10.   Matthew 25. Three Vital Parables.

11.   Psalm 119. The Law of God.

12. Ezekiel 33:1-20. Is There Blood on Our Hands? (See also Paul's farewell, Acts 20:17-37.)

13. Daniel 1. Hope for Freshmen.

14. Isaiah 40. The Glory of God.

15. Isaiah 53. The Lamb of God.

16. Isaiah 55. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth..."

17. Ecclesiastes 12. The Conclusion of the Matter. (Verses 9-14 are hand-picked for students.)

18. Exodus 20:1-17. The Ten Commandments.

III. BOOKS TO STUDY

1. James. Practical Christianity.
2. Ephesians. The Revelation of the Church.
3. Mark. Meet Jesus, in Person.
4. Acts 1-15. The Beginnings of the Church.
5. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. Advice to Young Leaders.
6. 1 John. How to Make Sure that You are Saved.
7. Nehemiah. God's (Re-)builder.
8. Jonah. God's Reluctant Messenger.
9. Malachi. The Lord's Complaint.
10. Haggai. Getting Our Priorities Right.
11. Ecclesiastes. Life, From the Underside.
12. Ruth. A Beautiful Love Story.

IV. FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES

THE FOLLOWING POINTS ARE TAKEN FROM THE U.C.C.F. STATEMENT OF FAITH, AND LIE AT THE HEART OF ANY SOUND (BIBLICAL) CHRISTIAN FAITH:

1. **The unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the God Head:** Gen. 1:26 (a); Deut. 6:4; Mark 2:1 - 12, 12:29; John 1:1 - 18, 3:12-18 and 5:16-30, 10:22-39, 14:1-34; Acts 5:1-4; Rom. 1:1- 4; 1 Cor. 12:6; Eph. 4:6; Heb. 1:1-14.

2. **The Sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption, and final judgement:** Psalm 139; Isa. 40:27-31, 44:21-24, 45:18-24; Rom. 8:28-39, 9:14-21, 11:33-36; 1 Tim. 6:11; Heb. 1:1-2.

3. **The Divine Inspiration and entire trustworthiness of The Holy Scriptures as originally given, and their supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct:** Joshua 1:1-9; Psalm 19:7-8, 119:11, 16, 105, 160; John 10:35(b); Acts 17:10, 11, 18:24-28; 1Thess. 5:27; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Tim. 4:13; Heb. 1:1-3, 4:12; 2 Peter 1:2-4, 16-21, 3:15-18.

4. **The universal sinfulness and guilt of all men since the fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation:** Psalm 51:3-6, 82:6-7; Rom. 1:18-35, 3:9-23, 5:12-19, 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 9:27.

5. **Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin through the sacrificial death (as our Representative and Substitute) of Jesus Christ only, the incarnate Son of God:** Isa. 52:13-53:12; John 1:29, 36, 3:14-18; Rom. 3:21-26, 5:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 2:10-17, 7:18-28, 9:11-14, 23-28, 10:1-25, 12:22-24; 1 Peter 1:18-20, 2:24, 25, 3:18;   Rev. 1:5-6.

6. **The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and his ascension to the right hand of God the Father:** John 20:24-29; Acts 1:1-11, 2:22-36,   3:13-15, 9:1-19 and 22:6-15 and 26:12-26,   10:38-43, 17:24-31; Rom. 1:1-4, 6:1-9,   8:11; 1 Cor. 15:1-8, 12-44; 2 Cor. 5:6; Eph. 1:19-21; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:1; Acts 7:55.

7. **The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration:** John 3:3,5, 8:6, 16:63; Rom. 8:9, 13-16; Gal. 3:3, 4:6; Titus 3:4-7; 1 John 4:13.

8. **The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone:** Rom. 1:16,17, 3:20-28, 4:4-8, 4:18-5:2, 5:6-11; Gal. 2:16, 20, 3:2,5,8,11-14,22-24; Eph. 2:8-9;
Acts 10:43.

9. **The indwelling work of the Holy Spirit in the believer:** John 14:17-26; 1 John 3:24, 4:13, 5:6;   John 16:13-15; Rom. 8:1-5, 9,11,14-16, 10:15-17; 1 Cor. 12:13;   2 Cor. 1:21-22, 3:3; Gal. 4:6, 5:15-25; Eph. 2:18, 5:18-21.

10. **The one Holy Universal Church which is the body of Christ and to which all true believers belong:** Matt. 16:18; John 17:20-23; Acts 2:37-47, 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Eph. 1:15-23, 4:1-16, 5:25-27; Heb. 12:18-24.

11. **The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus:** Acts 1:11; Rom. 8:19-24; 1 Cor 11:26; Titus 2:13 – 14; 2 Peter 3:8 – 14; 1 Thess 4:13 – 18; 2 Thess 1:10, 2:1 – 12.

PERSONAL EVANGELISM

[Jesus] told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the
dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his
name to all nations . . ." -- Luke 24:46, 47

In our hands, we hold the life and purpose of the Church, we hold the hope of the world. That
purpose, as Jesus put it, is to share his life changing good news with every man, woman and
child in the world — opening the way for that gospel to transform the world as Christ fills it with
his grace and glory.

Unfortunately, many -- perhaps, most -- of us simply don't know how to share this good news
with another person, or to help him commit his life to Christ and lay a solid foundation for life as
a disciple of Jesus Christ. The reason is no mystery: most of us simply have never been trained
in sharing the gospel.

The purpose of this course, therefore, is to supply this lack, so that we will be able to understand
the gospel, experience its power, and communicate it effectively to other people.

1.   Instructions

This course comprises a set of basic exercises, group discussions and practical assignments, with
optional material for enrichment. To gain the maximum benefit in your study group, we
recommend that you:

1.   Carefully go through the preliminary exercise.

2.   Prepare in advance for Group Discussions, and work thoughtfully through the guideline
        questions -- but don't be afraid to explore important points which crop up spontaneously.

3.   Do the practical exercises.

4.   Put into immediate practice in your life the things you learn.

5.   Take good notes: "the weakest ink is stronger than the strongest memory."

2.   Preliminary Exercise

[To be done in an introductory session for the course, or by the members on their own.]

There are four keys to being an effective witness to the gospel:

1.   The gospel must be working with life-changing power in our own lives.

2.   We must see that the mandate to witness to and disciple the nations is binding upon each one of us with "All authority" [Matt 28:18].

3.   We must long to see men, women and children set free from the chains and destruction of sin through the power of the gospel.

4.   We must realise that our task does not end with "The Sinner's Prayer"; rather, we must commit ourselves to the full task of helping to ground each new disciple.

Consider the following, individually or as a group, to clarify what we need to emphasise:

1.   Are you sure you are saved? Why or why not?

2.   If not, what will you do?

3.   If you are, how has the gospel changed your life?

4.   Read Matt 28:18 - 20. What is the extent and what is the purpose of the Authority of Jesus? What are the tasks he assigned to us under our mandate to disciple the nations?

5.   If a Bible were put in your hand and you were asked to help someone receive Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, what would you do?

6.   How would you explain the key words you would use, such as: sin, repent, confess, faith, pray, Saviour, Lord?

7.   Similarly, how would you go about helping to ground a new believer in the Faith?

8.   Evaluate your strong and weak points. What are the areas you need to stress as you seek to bear witness to Jesus and disciple the nations?

3.   GROUP DISCUSSION I: Proclaiming the Gospel

PREPARATION: Read Acts 3:1 - 4:22. (It's a story.) Write out short notes on how Peter and John presented the gospel in the Temple.

Some time after Pentecost, Peter and John were going into the Temple to pray. At the gate, they met a lame beggar, and all Heaven broke loose:

1.   Jesus, through his representatives, healed the man at the gate, and a crowd gathered. They seized the chance to share the Gospel. What were their main points?

2.   Soon, they were arrested and taken before the Ruling Council. What were their main points?

3.   What factors gave Peter and John credibility as they spoke to the crowd and to the Council? What was the impact of Jesus' miraculous power?

4.   If we are to be effective in sharing the gospel today, we too must be credible. What factors build or damage such credibility?

5.   In the light of what we have seen above, how should we, as individuals and as a group, go about bearing witness to the gospel?

6.   "Many who heard the message believed." Based on what the Apostles said, what were the key steps involved in turning to Christ? [Compose a Sinner's Prayer of commitment, and list supporting scriptures for the confessions and petitions in the prayer.]

7.   In the light of our findings, what are the steps involved in an effective presentation of the gospel? What needs to be in place in our own lives? What key points should we stress? How will we help those who respond as they commit themselves to Christ?

8.   In the light of Matt 28:18 - 20, Titus 2:11 - 14 and Acts 2:36 - 47, what should we do to help ground new believers? How can we do it?

ENRICHMENT: Work through the Study "Justification, Faith and Salvation." This will help you explore the most detailed outline of the gospel in the Bible, which is found in the letter to the Romans. It will also help you deal with challenges such as legalism and baptismal regeneration.

4.   GROUP DISCUSSION II: Reaching out to People

PREPARATION: Read John 4:1 - 42 and jot down short notes on how Jesus reached out to this Samaritan woman and her town. What was his attitude? His strategy?

Our mandate requires us to reach out to all men, everywhere, with the gospel. As we have seen, to be effective, the gospel's power must be at work in our own lives, and we must know how to present the gospel message, and to help those who respond as they commit themselves to Christ and begin to live as his disciples in the real world.

These things, however, are not enough. We must also learn how to reach out to people where they are and as they are. To do so, we will study Jesus' example.

On his way back to Galilee from Judaea, Jesus stopped by the well in Sychar at noon, and waited. Soon, an outcast woman -- only such a person would try to fetch water in the heat of the day -- came to fetch water.

Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink:

1.   How did this act enable him to cross the barriers -- gender, religious, racial, moral --
        separating her from him? How can Jesus' example help us stop "cutting God out" in our
        day-to-day dealings with people?

2.   They went on to talk about "water." The woman asked for some of his special "water,"
        and he told her "Go, call your husband and come back." Why was this a sore point, and
        how did she react?

3.   How did Jesus counter her evasions?

4.   Why did he bring the gospel into the conversation by implication rather than directly and
        explicitly?

5.   In the light of Jesus' approach, how should we bring the gospel into our own
        conversations? How should we respond to attempts to lash out or   evade the sharp point
        of the gospel when it begins to bite? (What about handling intellectual questions or
        challenges?)

6.   In the end, not only did the woman respond to the gospel, but she brought others from her
        community to listen to Jesus. Was this partnership in ministry a deliberate part of Jesus'
        strategy?

7.   In the light of our findings, how should we reach out to our families, friends,
        acquaintances and neighbours in our own community?

8.   How can we reach out to people in isolated groups (such as the Islamic, Hindu, Academic
        and Rastafarian sub-cultures) in our community?

9.   How can we reach out to people in other communities?

EXERCISE: [to be done in pairs during the week or in a special session]

1.   Draft a simple outline for sharing the gospel with an individual and leading him or her to
        Christ.
2.   Practice in pairs, exchanging roles and discussing strong and weak points.
3.   Share the gospel with at least one person during the week, and report the results during
        the next session.

5.   GROUP DISCUSSION III: Building Disciples

PREPARATION: Read Matt 28:18 - 20, Luke 6:39 - 40, Acts 2:36 - 47, 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2:11 - 14 and Heb 10:23 - 25. Taken together, what do they say about Evangelism and building disciples?

Points for discussion:

1.   Read the following story:

   Peter is a powerful preacher. Each year, he leads a hundred new people to commit themselves to Christ. However, he is so busy preaching that he doesn't take time to help them work through the basic points of Christian discipleship. As a direct result, most of his new converts are frustrated and ineffective.

   Paul, on the other hand, is a trembling young believer. He shares his new-found faith with his best friend, John. John soon becomes a Christian too. They are so excited and happy that they keep sharing with each other about their relationship with God, and, by the end of the year, both have grown tremendously.

   Each year, Peter continues to lead a hundred new believers to Christ, but never takes the time to help any of them. Paul and his friends each lead but one person to Christ per year; however, they do spend the time to follow them up carefully.

   After ten years, who has led more people to Christ? After twenty? Whose approach is more effective? Can they be combined?

2.   Compare the approach of the early Christians with the points brought out in the story. What lessons can we draw out for our own work?

3.   Let us think back over our own lives as Christians. What were the key insights, events, practical pointers, practices, teachings and examples that made a vital difference? Why and how did they make a difference?

4.   Given the warning in Luke 6:39 - 40, what are some things we must deal with in our own lives before we can safely lead others? How will we deal with these problems?

5.   In the light of the above, plan a follow up programme for working with a new believer. (It may be useful to consult the following list of ideas.)

ENRICHMENT: Ideas for Effective Follow Up

Follow Up, the work of grounding a new believer and helping him to grow and bear fruit, almost always seems to be an after-thought. Even the name we use (unfortunately) suggests this.

Nothing could be further from its true importance. Just think: what takes more time, effort and thought -- bringing a new baby into the world or helping him to grow and become a worthwhile adult?

The following should be useful:

1.   First of all, a new believer needs to be clear that he is in fact saved. Lack of biblical assurance at this point cripples attempts to live as a Christian.

        The best way is to sit down with the new believer and, together, examine scriptures which make plain just how he can be sure that he is saved.

        For instance, we could use 1 John 5:13 and John 3:16. Gentle but firm questions will help the new believer build up his faith and assurance as he sees for himself what God has promised. (Imagine a typical dialogue. Some role playing and discussion may be useful.)

2.   Second, a new believer needs to lay a good framework for living as a Christian. Personal devotions and Bible Study (Psalm 1, Joshua 1:1 - 9), witnessing (Luke 24:46 - 48, Acts 1:8), involvement in the fellowship and ministry of the Church (Acts 2:36 - 47, Heb 10:23 - 25) and finding and fulfilling his role in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:7, Eph 4:15, 16) are vital.

        A series of dyadic (one-on-one) meetings which grapple with these and other related issues can be rather helpful.

3.   It helps to take the time to build up a friendship with the new believer. In this context, a wealth of general sharing about life and its struggles can be handled, and the power of encouragement rooted in how God helps you with your own struggles can be brought to bear (2 Cor 1:3, 4). This is also the best way to help a young believer find a Church home and begin to actively work for God in the home, school, workplace etc. Dyad is also the best context for passing on skills such as Bible Study, sharing the gospel, praying, leading a meeting -- and leading in general, etc.

4.   Introduce the new believer to good books and good authors.

5.   Pray for him daily, and guard him from the cults, deceptions, side-tracks etc. Show how to pick up warning signs and help him escape, if that is necessary. (See Acts 20:28 - 31 and Eph 4:11 - 14.)

6.   Useful Scriptures

1.   Showing our guilt: Rom 1:18 - 3:20, esp. 1:21 -24, 28, 2:1 - 6, 21 - 24, 3:9; Eph 2:1 - 3; Gal 6:7, 8; 1 Tim 6:3 - 10.

2.   Showing our helplessness: Isaiah 59:1, 2; Prov 28:13; Luke 13:1- 5; Rom 1:18, 19, 3:9 - 20, 22 - 24, 6:23.

3.   Showing who is the Saviour: Matt 1:20, 21; John 1:29, 3:14 - 21 (cf. Num 21:4 - 9), 5:22 - 24, 14:6; Acts 4:8 - 12; Rom 3:21 - 24, 6:20 - 23; 1 Cor 15:1 - 11; 1 John 1:5 - 9, 5:9 - 13.

4.   Showing how to receive him: John 3:14 - 16, 5:24; Rom 4:18 - 5:2, 10:5 - 13, esp. 8 - 10; 1 John 2:22 - 25, 3:21 - 24, 4:15, 5:11 - 13.

7.   Some Useful Books

Manley-Pippert, Becky. *Out of the Saltshaker,* IVP.

Little, Paul. *How to Give Away Your Faith,* IVP.

Torrey, R. A. *How to Witness to Anyone,* Whitaker.

Peace, Richard. *Small Group Evangelism,* IVP.

Dyrness, H. *Christian Apologetics in a World Community,* IVP.

Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Evangelism,* Spire (Revell).

Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Discipleship,* Revell.

Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church,* Eerdmans.

8. ENRICHMENT: College Evangelisation Strategy

The following material is taken, with permission, from a CONECAR '84 Workshop Paper, and revised. It is included with this course because it helps us to focus on the strategic importance of the tertiary campus and to develop a useful philosophy of campus ministry. It is suggested that you read the paper, then work through the attached guideline questions.

ON THE EVANGELISATION OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

College and University students are a privileged and important fraction of the Caribbean's population. Whether by dint of hard work, native brilliance, or influential connexions, our region's tertiary students have been chosen for the kind of training that will prepare them to be our future teachers, professionals, scientists, academics, politicians and other community leaders.

At the same time, the years a student spends in College or University are also often a time for personal growth and change, which may issue in dramatic and radical reorientation of beliefs, values, commitments and direction in life. Often, such new orientations set the trajectory for the rest of the student's life.

The birth of the Charismatic Movement in Jamaica provides a striking example. In 1964, Peter Morgan and Tony Williamson enrolled in the UWI Mona Campus. They "met there, in the leadership of the Inter Varsity Fellowship, two Guyanese, Alvin Thompson and Winston McGowan."[1]

They were impressed with Alvin's and Winston's commitment and prayer life, but "regarded the Baptism of the Holy Spirit [a Charismatic Distinctive] as something more akin to Pocomania [a Jamaican cult], perhaps belonging to the small village church and certainly to be regarded with suspicion."[2]

Both eventually came to believe in and experience this Charismatic Distinctive Phenomenon during their course of study on the campus. They have since gone on to become key leaders in the Charismatic Movement in Jamaica. That movement, from small beginnings in the 1970's, has had significant impact on Jamaican church life through its teaching, conferences, stress on discipleship and fellowship, leadership training, the injection of a charismatic flavour into a generation of youth in the church in the 1970's and 1980's, and through the establishment of several charismatic congregations, "forming a worshipping community of more than 1,000 [by 1984]."[3]

As Grace Gordon notes, "The influence of these two Guyanese was the dynamic element which marks the beginning of the Charismatic Movement in Jamaica."[4] In short, this Movement, which can fairly be said to have dramatically influenced the life of the church in Jamaica and the region as a whole, was born out of the influence of two students on two other students, issuing in a radical reorientation of their lives -- Peter Morgan, for one, had previously been "known more for his prowess on the athletics track and football field than for his commitment to Christ."[5]

My thesis, then, is that tertiary students are in training to become leaders in our schools, churches, communities and countries, and are simultaneously passing through a critical stage in their personal growth and maturation. This implies that tertiary institutions and their student bodies occupy a strategic, perhaps a decisively strategic, niche in Caribbean society. Further, it justifies and demands that we focus significant attention on and commit adequate resources and personnel to the evangelisation of the tertiary campus and its student body.

In the rest of this paper, I will first explore the developmental psychology of the tertiary student in a little more depth, review important factors that should inform our strategy, point out some practical problems, then draw conclusions and make recommendations about campus evangelism strategy.

1. How Campus Years can be Critical

During particular periods of his life, a person faces certain developmental tasks, arising from "processes of physical maturation, cultural processes and pressures, and the desires, aspirations, and values of the emerging personality."[6]

Gene Denham, a Counselling Psychologist on the staff of the SCFSU, has described five such tasks that confront tertiary students[7]:

> 1. Resolution of the Child-Parent Relationship;
>
> 2. Solidifying a Sexual Identity;
>
> 3. The formation of a Personal Value System;
>
> 4. Developing the capacity for True Intimacy;
>
> 5. Choosing a Life's Work.

The list is formidable, and easily explains the dramatic and radical changes some students experience during their course of study on the tertiary campus. I can never forget the lady from my local congregation who begged me not to become like her son, who "went out with his Bible at the top of his suitcase, and came back with it at the bottom."

Gene's comments on Value Systems are particularly trenchant:

> We are raised with a set of values and beliefs, primarily those of parents, siblings, church, school, and community. For values to become internalised, they must be reflected on, and made the objects of our best efforts and judgement in decision making . . .
>
> Many students (Christians, too!) have never worked at the former. If we conceptualise the College experience as a situation in which one is confronted daily by radically

differing value systems, be they religious, political, economic, racial, philosophical, and whether they be presented by peers, profs, or pals, we will see why there may be so many Christian victims in this area -- especially in the first year. The total collapse of the value system can follow and is a catastrophe of major

proportions . . .

The alternative to this is for friends to recognise the symptoms and offer support through this period. Or, students may find another set of values (often ready-made) and swallow it whole -- at least for now.8

The dynamics are neutral. They explain how a student, having his Christian faith sharply challenged for the first time, may lose it. They also show how such a challenge, providing the student has good support and is willing to seek or accept help, can greatly strengthen his faith. (Further, they imply that it might be a good idea for our churches to prepare prospective College students to face the challenges they will meet on campus, by helping them to think through their basic values and beliefs. Certainly, it is better to face hard questions first in a supportive home and church environment than as a disoriented freshman.)

Moreover, the dynamics indicate that the first step in succesful evangelism on the tertiary campus is to listen to and analyse the issues that confront the College or University student. An approach to the gospel and evangelism that cannot relate the Christian message to the hard questions asked by Philosophy, Science, History, Sociology, Psychology, Politics and other vital areas has no business being on the campus. Nor will a merely defensive approach do! Instead, we must boldly put forward challenging theses about the human predicament and put forward a Christian agenda for the future.   College students, quite literally, embody that future! How else will we be able to fill the future leaders of our region with "the fulness of Christ"?9

2.   Critical Strategic Factors

Three factors, the nature of our mandate, the feasibility of various approaches to evangelism, and specific hindrances must be addressed before we can draw appropriate conclusions and make recommendations.

2.1   How Should we Understand our Evangelistic Mandate?

The Great Commission falls into three parts: first, Jesus boldly declared his authority; second, he instructed his disciples, and through them, us, to make disciples; third, he promised his presence, thus his guidance, protection and power.10

The central point is "make disciples," by baptising those who commit themselves to Jesus and teaching them to obey his commands. Since baptism is contingent on repentance from sin and believing upon Jesus as Lord and Saviour11, the Commission clearly implies that we must preach, argue and counsel, using the gospel. Nevertheless, this is not where the stress falls -- gospel preaching is the means to the end, discipleship. Thus, we need to come to view evangelism in a new (but only new to us!) way, to define it in terms of discipleship.

Mathetes, the word we translate "disciple," basically means "a student or an apprentice."12 Jesus modelled his meaning himself, when he called the twelve out from his circle of followers to be with him, to follow him to death if necessary, to share a common life under a law of total, self-sacrificing love, and to send them out with the gospel, initiating the ongoing WIN, NURTURE, SEND cycle of Christian Discipleship.13

The basic principle behind this process of discipling within a framework of nurturing relationships is both simple and powerful: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student [disciple] is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."14

It is therefore no surprise to read the secret of the very first church's powerful witness:

> Those who accepted [the gospel] message were baptised . . . They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer . . . many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.15

The pattern can be summarised:

1.   Holy Spirit-empowered preaching, often accompanied by signs and wonders, cut hearts and brought men face to face with the issue of repentance. Those who committed themselves to Christ were then baptised, which was the visible mark of such commitment.

2.   A nurturing community developed, with stresses on teaching, sharing (even of possessions), prayer, praise, large meetings (in the temple) and small meetings (in homes).

3.   Evangelistic witness was a daily aspect of church life, leading to a steady flow of new converts. In the light of Acts 8:1,4: "all except the apostles were scattered . . . . Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went," it is clear that this daily outreach involved the general membership, not just a select few leaders -- which also had the added benefit that gaoling or killing the leaders and scattering the followers simply accelerated the spreading of the gospel.

Clearly, this example has much to say to us today . Still, it does not capture the whole picture. We also must factor in Paul's explanation of why Jesus came:

> (. . . He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some [to be leaders] . . . to prepare

God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ . . . . speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.16

Jesus came to fill the whole Universe with his glory. This is to happen as each disciple, acting in love, does his or her part to build the unity and maturity of his body, the Church. Leaders are to train and coordinate, not dominate -- and the Church must not be split into two classes: those who minister, and those who only come to receive ministry. Instead, each believer must view himself as called to serve Christ and must work out that call from God in every aspect of his life.

Thus, our overall task is to fill the world in each of its aspects -- family, education, arts, sports, business, science, politics, whatever -- with the glory of Christ. It is to this end that we seek to win, nurture and send out disciples into the whole world. Therefore, evangelism must be integrated into this overall vision of the grand mandate of the Church under the Lordship of Jesus.

2.2   Approaches in Evangelisation

We do not lack for variety in models of how to evangelise!

There are mass crusades of the type led by Billy Graham and Louis Palau. There are gospel concerts, evangelistic plays and coffee houses. We have Christian radio and TV. Magazines and books are sent by mail, or attract our attention in bookstores and on magazine and book racks, not to mention booktables. Classified Ad sections tell us about correspondence courses. Some ministries stress evangelising one's friends; some promote evangelistic group Bible Studies; others stress street witnessing or go knocking on doors. The variety is almost endless.

Amidst this dazzling variety, however, we need to heed Becky Manley-Pippert's caution:

Much of our evangelism is ineffective because we depend too much on technique and strategy. Evangelism has slipped into the sales department. I am convinced that we must look at Jesus and the quality of life that he calls us to, as a model for what to believe and how to reach out to others.17

The punch in evangelism does not so much lie in preaching techniques as in discipleship. Therefore, as we consider questions of technique or tactics, we must bear their subsidiary nature in mind. If techniques get out of hand, there is a well documented danger that they may become manipulative, twisting perceptions and emotions to produce "conversions" more akin to brainwashing than to the new birth.18 (The impact of various cults and manipulative sects on campuses over the past few decades clearly shows that this danger is all too real.)

As we try to work with students on campus, it will soon become clear that some approaches fit better than others. Students are crowded together in labs, lectures, tutorials, cafeterias and dorms, and may be together for months or years at a time, so they tend to know one another. Evangelistic approaches which force students to act like strangers, such as door-knocking, will be seen to be artificial and inappropriate. There are two major exceptions: large campuses with large numbers of commuting students (who usually have little time for extracurricular activities) and the orientation period at the beginning of the year, during which time students are just getting to know one another.

Tracts also often fail to fit in well. It seems that it is mainly Christians who bother to read them. One look at a typical tract tells us why: stereotypical story, fine print, crowded layout, poor paper. Poor aesthetics, in short. Tracts which are topical and use good graphics, especially the layout principles of the high quality comic book, can work quite well. Chick Publications has many good examples of effective tracts (at least in terms of layout); they could be used as models for us to use as we design our own, which is the absolute best way to get just what we desire. (A rather effective related technique is to use printed invitations to an outreach event, which makes it much easier for students to broach spiritual issues as they invite friends, acquaintances and strangers.)

Everyone loves good music, dance and drama -- and tertiary students are no exception. A good variety concert or play will draw students who would never otherwise go to an outreach event. Indeed, during the 1980's, on the Mona Campus, Christian drama groups competed in drama competitions and built up a formidable reputation for excellence, which multiplied the reach and effectiveness of their ministry and drew significant national attention. These performing arts can work as powerful vehicles for exposing hidden attitudes, showing that the Christian faith gives strength in the face of the hard questions and problems posed by life in the real world, and forcing audiences to face up to the claims of Christ. Nor is this power confined to the stage: impromptu skits, street drama and street concerts can be every inch as effective. (For that matter, role play and discussion is a powerful training tool for personal evangelism and other areas of discipleship.)

Classic mass evangelistic meetings can also be effective. We must, however, bear the unbeliever in mind as we plan and present such a meeting. We may enjoy forty five minutes of choruses, an hour length sermon and a fifteen minute altar call; often, the unbeliever, coaxed to come, sees two hours of wasted study time and feels uncomfortable simply because he does not fit in with the Evangelical sub-culture. Further, if ninety seven out of a hundred students in attendance are known members of the campus Fellowship (usually because only one or two have brought their friends), the meeting may simply be a colossal waste of time, effort and money.

Cafeteria tables are great places for wide-ranging informal discussion. A few well-placed comments or questions can often bring the gospel into the conversation -- all it requires is an ear for issues which the gospel has something to say to, directly or by implication or even imagery (look at how Jesus spoke with the woman at the well!). It is wise not to do this with every conversation, however; those who hog conversations will soon be known as bores.

Book tables under shady trees, "liming" sessions in dorm blocks and similar unhurried places and times can also provide similar opportunities, as can video (or audio) tape presentations. A panel discussion, or a debate, or a presentation by a well-known speaker, if focussed on an issue which students feel strongly about, will pull out the crowds and trigger much subsequent discussion. Just make sure the publicity and the meeting itself are well organised.

What about the local congregation? This requires us to first answer another question: why do college and university students go to church?

Some go because they are Christians. Others, religious but not born again, go out of a sense of need or duty, or even simply out of habit. Some are honestly seeking answers to their questions. Frankly, some -- especially some young men -- are seeking sex. By and large, however, unbelievers are not likely to attend worship services regularly.

Good programming -- topical debates, problem solving workshops, student socials, perhaps a good concert or play -- may lure unbelievers. I wonder, though, whether this should be the primary effort of the local congregation seeking to have a student ministry.

My unease is simple to state: "come" versus "go." Doesn't it seem slightly odd that we spend so much time, money and effort on trying to invite the unbeliever to "come" to our crusades, concerts and services when Jesus commanded us to "go" into the world with the gospel?

Should we not rather emphasise the building of solid disciples fired with the vision that all the world, including the tertiary campus, must bow the knee and confess Jesus as Lord? What if the young people from our congregations were trained, commended and sent out to the campus as missionaries targetted on the next generation of community leaders?

2.3   Problems to be Tackled

The following are only put forward because they are the proverbial slice of the cake which "has in it all the ingredients."

1.   Nearly all students on campuses in the Commonwealth Caribbean have already heard the basic gospel message. How can we break through their indifference, their confusion, and their cynicism about the hypocrisy, worldliness and ineffectiveness of so many who profess to be Christians?

2.   Many Christian students are afraid to open their mouths to bear witness to Christ, for fear of ridicule, refutation and possible persecution. Too often, they have never had even basic training in sharing the gospel and handling the intellectual and social challenges Christians face on a typical highly secularised campus. Given this, it is no surprise to discover that they are unable to articulate what their faith has to say about important social, academic, or political issues.

3. The spillover of sectarian squabbling into the campus causes disunity among Christian students, discredits the gospel and dishonours the name of Christ. The resultant proliferation of tiny sectarian groups dramatically weakens the force of Christian student influence on the campus, and thus also reduces the calibre of future Christian community leaders.

4. Sometimes, there is a gap in understanding and trust between youths in congregations and some of the older more influential members. This tends to drive students and recent graduates away, and makes those who remain hold back from service in the church, or to become confrontational. It also reduces feedback from the young people to the point where the church's ministry may simply fail to address their needs.

5. Enthusiasm for spiritual truth and service can lead to neglect of academic work, especially during the deceptively lightly loaded period at the start of the year or semester. Disaster can result.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

As has become clear, our mandate is far broader than just the making of converts; instead, we are expected to disciple the nations, filling every aspect of life in the world with the glory of Christ under his Lordship. This first implies that we must clarify what discipleship is, how it works in real life, and how we should go about discipling the nations.

An examination of the first century paradigm reveals a clear pattern: Christ gives leaders to the Church, who work with a community of witness, nurture, worship, prayer and mission, to train and coordinate its members as they work together (in love, truth, power and holiness) to build the unity and maturity of the Church in the image of Christ. As this happens, the Church disciples each nation and generation -- the world is extended in both space and time -- under the Lordship of Christ.

Education and leadership are thus central to the purpose of the church. A focus on the tertiary campus is a natural outcome of these emphases, since the assigned task of Colleges and Universities is the education of the next generation of leadership for our communities and nations. Thus, if we ignore the challenge to evangelise the tertiary student, we may well be yielding without contest the decisive high ground in the spiritual battle for the Caribbean.

We must therefore have a clear and powerful strategy for the evangelisation of college and university students:

1. Ideally, a campus ministry should operate as a united expression of the body of Christ on that campus, under the united corporate leadership of the Church in the community or nation within which the campus is located, since it is the unity of the Church which is the ultimate demonstration of the truth of the gospel.19 Sadly, such united corporate leadership, as a rule, does not exist. In its absence, such a ministry should maintain strong links to a broad array of church leaders in the community or nation, and should

firmly stand for the visible unity of the Christian community on the campus and in the wider community, without compromising the fundamental truths of the Faith.

2.   The operations of such a campus ministry should emphasise the WIN, NURTURE, SEND cycle of discipleship, within the framework of the vision that the purpose of the Church is to fill all of life -- including the academic, the professional, the socio-political, the cultural, the commercial, and the familial spheres -- with the fulness of Christ. This will demand that Bible Study, teaching and training, fellowship, body ministry and nurture, prayer and worship, and evangelistic outreach and missions, receive their due and balanced emphasis.

3.   The central structural feature of such a ministry should be the cell or small group. Cells are ideal for nurture and training; easily support dyadic sub-groups focussed on specific individual needs; provide exposure and opportunities for developing and expressing gifts, skills and leadership; can be integrated into larger group structures; and are simply the most flexible, handy structures available to us for ministry to students.

4.   Students involved in the ministry will require basic training in sharing the gospel on campus (and, often, in general) and in handling the challenges to their faith which they are likely to encounter. Support for students going through personal value system crises, as pointed out by Gene Denham, will also be important.

5.   Most students will only be on campus for a few years, so support staff who provide continuity, training resources and long term planning support are a vital part of the strategy.

6.   A strong emphasis on student involvement in the wider Christian community, especially attachment to a specific local congregation, helps them to maintain a focus on body life and ministry, as well as support and ready-made outlets for ministry in the post-campus phase of a student's life.

7.   This post-campus phase is a vital part of any student evangelisation strategy which aims to reach the future leaders of the community -- if graduates flounder, fail to become effective church and community leaders or generally backslide, then the student strategy has failed. Therefore, we must explicitly address the challenges graduates and prospective church and community leaders will face:

       1.   Marriage, singleness, sexuality and family life are the single most important challenges students will face in life.

       2.   Graduates will have to learn how to become positive change agents in the family, congregation, workplace and community.

       3.   As the most highly educated Christians in the community, they must be able to lead the church as it struggles against the forces which seek to secularise and/or paganise our culture and isolate the Church to a narrow

religious ghetto. In particular, they must deal with issues in the media, professional ethics, law, education, the arts, government and politics.

4.   Finally, they must view themselves as bound to obey the mandate to discipline the nations and fill the world with the fulness of Christ under his Lordship.

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GUIDELINE QUESTIONS

1.   Are you "bound to obey the mandate to disciple the nations and fill the world with the fulness of Christ under his Lordship"? What are some specific steps you can take towards this end during and after your course of College or University studies?

2.   When you hear words such as "evangelism," "outreach," "witnessing," and "discipleship," what are the images that come to mind? What does the Bible actually say about these things?

3.   This paper argues that tertiary students are in training to become the future leaders of the community, and that they are simultaneously passing through a critical stage in personal growth. Do you agree? How should your perspective on this issue inform your approach to living and serving Christ as a student? A graduate?

4.   How should your perspective on the strategic potential of the tertiary student inform how you interact with your fellow students as a disciple of Christ?

5.   Gene Denham lists five Developmental Tasks faced by typical tertiary students. How should you address them in your cell group? How can you apply them to your witnessing?

6.   Draw up an outline plan for following up the people who come to Christ as your cell group works to reach out to students on your campus.

7.   How could your ideas be applied to large scale outreach efforts on your campus? To your home congregation and community?

8.   It has been said that many Christians who were zealous on campus simply fade into the background or even backslide after graduation. What are some ways this could happen? How can you work to counteract this trend?

JUSTIFICATION, FAITH AND SALVATION

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes . . . [Rom. 1:16]

What is salvation? Can we be sure we have it? On what basis?

Paul of Tarsus, nearly two thousand years ago, in a letter to some Christians in Rome, boldly claimed that he had the answers. He said he knew what salvation is, why we need it, and how we can be sure we have it.

That claim is either arrogant folly, or it is the truth. Let us look carefully at what he says in his letter to the Romans, to see and sift exactly what he says. From this, we should be able to see how it relates to us here and now.

A.   Our Approach

It has been said that "You can make the Bible say anything!" Sadly, it has often been true.

The reason, however, is quite simple: we can MAKE the Bible say what we want, or, by unconsciously putting thoughts into the writer's mouth, distort our ability to see what he means. We must be careful to let the Bible speak for itself.

Our basic approach, then, should be inductive. We shall first read carefully, to observe what Paul actually says -- his words and how he uses them; prose, poetry, figures of speech, logical argument. We will then ask probing questions to see what he means, and to discover how it relates to us, so we can apply it to our own lives.

The basic text is Romans 1:16 - 3:31. In this section, Paul explains why he preaches. He argues that no man has any excuse for doing wrong and that all of us stand guilty and condemned before God. But, God has made a way out! That way is through Jesus, and our response to him.

> [NOTE: As Francis Schaeffer points out in *Death in the City*, Paul is here speaking to "the man without the Bible" and so does not start from the creation and fall, but rather from the fact that all men have a sense of right and wrong, but fail to live up to it. This odd fact, as C S Lewis argues in more detail in *Mere Christianity*, is a strong proof that there is a Moral Power behind the universe, a Power we have offended by our hypocritical immorality -- see Rom 2:1 - 3. Thus, by appealing to publicly available evidence, Paul avoids the logical trap of using the Bible to appeal to those who do not accept it, and shows why all men need to respond to the gospel of Christ. In dealing with the highly educated today, I believe it is wise for us to follow this example.]

It would be good to read the section, carefully, in a modern English version before proceeding further.

B.   First, the Bad News

Paul's first contention is that God's wrath "is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness", men who "are without excuse".

Read Romans 1:18-32:

1.   Can any of us honestly say we have never done, said, or thought anything wrong? That we didn't know that we were doing wrong?

2.   Paul goes on to comment that our moral judgements are hypocritical (2:1-6, esp. v.3.) Have you lived up to the standards you set for other people?

3.   Compare Rom. 2:17-25. Does having a list of what we should not do make it any easier to avoid doing wrong?

4.   Imagine yourself standing before God on Judgement Day. The exhibits include everything you did, said or thought, including the moral judgements you have used against other people. In the light of this evidence would you be declared guilty or innocent? (Ignore for the moment the question of forgiveness through the work of Christ.)

C.   The Good News

Paul concludes his indictment "We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (3:9). Is there any hope?

Read Rom. 3:19 - 26:

1.   What is the effect of knowing what we should do, and not doing it?

2.   What does it mean to be "right with God" or to be "at peace with God"? Is this what "righteousness" and "justification" mean? [Hint: look at Psalm 32: 1 - 5, and compare Rom. 4: 1 - 8 and 5: 1 - 2. What does it mean to be forgiven by God? Also, look up and asses what the word "justification means. A good Bible Dictionary would be an excellent place to start.]

3.   List the things said in 3: 19 - 26 about righteousness. What does your list suggest to you about its importance and relevance to real people in real life?

4.   Read 1 Cor. 15: 1 - 4 and compare it with Rom. 3: 23 - 26. Deduce from this what it means to have "faith in Jesus Christ" or "faith in his blood".

What is the consequence of having such faith? (Hint: see Rom 5: 1 - 5.)

5.   In the light of Rom. 9:30 - 10:13, esp. 10: 8 -13, how can we exercise this faith? If we fail to do so, what will be the result?

D.   Is it really that simple?

Paul writes that God "justifies the man who has faith in Jesus." When rediscovered by Martin Luther in the Sixteenth Century, this principle ignited the Reformation and became the pillar of Evangelical Christianity. But, is that the whole story?

1.   The Issue of Baptism

Over the past few years, many of us have been challenged that unless we are baptised under the understanding that baptism is necessary for us to be forgiven, then we are not yet forgiven of our sins.

The best way to clarify this is by examining how the early Christians responded to the conversion of Cornelius the Centurion.

Read Acts 10:23 - 11:18, esp. 10:43 - 48 and 11:14 - 18, and compare Acts 15: 1 - 11, esp. verses 7-9.

1.   List the sequence of events leading up to the baptism and acceptance into the Church of Cornelius and the other Gentiles who were with him.

2.   What was the significance of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles who were listening to Peter's sermon? When did this happen during the sequence of events - was it before or after their baptism?

3.   Closely examine 15: 7 - 9. What was the condition for purifying the hearts of the Gentiles? Was this any different from the condition for purifying Jewish hearts? [What do hearts need to be purified from?]

4.   In the light of Acts 10:43, Rom. 3:22 - 26, 4:4 - 8, 5:1 - 2, 9:30 - 10:13, Eph. 2:8-10, John 3:13 - 18 and 36, 5:24 etc., can this case be dismissed as an exception to the general rule? What, then, is the condition for God to forgive us?

5.   In the light of Rom. 4:4 - 5, 10:17 and Heb. 11:6, how would you exercise "faith"? If you trust Christ, given Eph. 2:1 - 10, how will it affect your life? How does this tie in with "faith without works is dead"? [Cf. James 2:14 - 26 and 1 John 1:5 - 2:2 -- the point is growth in grace, not "sinless perfection"!]

6.	In Matt 28:18 - 20, we are commanded to baptise new disciples. As we saw with Cornelius, this expresses faith in Christ and marks acceptance into the visible Church. Read Rom 6:1 - 4, which discusses baptism as a symbolic burial and ressurrection. Given all that we have seen, how should we view the role of baptism in our lives? How should it affect how we live?

7.	Classically, salvation is viewed as having three phases: Justification -- salvation from the penalty of sin; Sanctification -- salvation from the enslaving power of sin; Glorification -- salvation from the presence of sin. (See Rom 5:1 - 5, 6:1 - 4, 8:1 - 4 and 28 - 30.) Given the above, where does baptism fit in with these phases?

## 2.	Keeping the Ten Commandments

A second challenge we often face is the question whether we are bound by the laws of Moses, and especially by the Ten Commandments.

Read Rom 13:8 - 14, esp. 13:8 - 10, 14:1 - 6, 13 - 18, and 22 - 23.

1.	Compare Paul's remarks in 13:8 - 10 with Jesus' in Matt 22:34 - 40. Given, for example, Jesus' point that lust is a species of adultery [Matt 5:27 - 28], does Paul's stress on cultivating the attitude and actions of love as the basis for practical morality make sense?

2.	Should we view lists of do's and don'ts as the basis for how we should live, or as tests which help us to see how well or poorly we are working out love to God and to men (who are made in God's image) in our lives?

3.	Re-examine Rom 9:30 - 10:4 and Acts 15:1 - 11 (esp. verse 5). Read Gal 2:15 - 21, esp. 16 and 21, and Col. 2:13 - 17:

	•	Is keeping the Law/Commandments a condition of being forgiven by God?

	•	Given Col 2:16 - 17 and Rom 14:5, 6 and 13 - 18, can we fairly conclude that we are bound by the Jewish Sabbath and dietary laws?

	•	Do we have any right to censure another believer over his practice in these and similar areas? [Examine Rom 14:14, 15, and 19 - 23, esp. 23.]

	•	How would you respond to Mary, who is not sure she should wear makeup, but does so anyway?

3.   Discipleship

In this final part of this study, we will explore just how broad the challenge implied by a commitment to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is. This will help us correct the tendency to live as if Salvation affects only a small part of our lives.

Read Matt 28:18 - 20, and Eph 1:15 - 23 & 4:8 - 16.

1.   What is the extent and what is the purpose of the Lordship of Jesus?

2.   What are the tasks he assigns to the Church as it operates under that Lordship?

3.   What are the responsibilities of the leaders and general membership of the Church under its mandate to fill the world with Christ's fulness?

4.   We are told that we are to disciple the nations. What are the specific characteristics -- knowledge, commitments, skills, attitudes and habits -- which are the hallmark of a disciple of Jesus? How can we help one another, and "all nations," develop these characteristics?

5.   Commitment to Christ implies surrender to his Lordship. What are some concrete steps you can take to work out these broader implications of Salvation in your life?

As we began this study, we asked "What is Salvation?" As we explored the issues, we asked and responded to many hard questions. As we close, I ask that you consider whether your answers are satisfactory, but more than that, I ask you to consider how to move these issues out of the Ivory Tower of academic debate into the real world of discipleship lived under the Lordship of Jesus.

PRAYER

> This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us -- whatever we ask -- we know that we have what we asked of him.-- 1 John 5:14, 15.

Prayer is a paradox. James tells us "You do not have, because you do not ask God," and John backs this up with the bold claim that if we ask according to God's will, "we know that we have what we asked of him." [James 4:2, 1 John 5:15.] And yet, Jesus said "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." [Matt 6:8.]

Why, then, should we pray to an all-knowing, all-loving Father, who delights to give us "Every good and perfect gift"? [James 1:17.]

Does prayer really do anything? If so, how? How, then, should we pray?

1. Prayer and Faith

Read Heb 11:1 - 6.

Faith gives substance to our hopes and certainty about things promised before we see them, because it rests on the faithfulness of the God who rewards those who earnestly seek him. Clearly, it is closely related to prayer.

1.   First, we must clarify what faith is. Examine Rom 4:4 - 5, 18 - 22 and 10:11, 16 and 17. Compare Heb 11:1 and 6, then make a list of what one does when he exercises faith. What is the result? How, then, would you define "faith"?

2.   In the light of "anyone who comes to him" [Heb 11:6], how does prayer relate to faith?

3.   In the light of Isaiah 59:1 - 4, sin cuts us off from approaching God. Read Heb 9:6 - 10 and 10:19 - 22. How can we become free to approach God? [Hint: see 1 John 1:5 - 9.]

4.   Read the warning in Deuteronomy 8:10 - 20. Is it true that people tend to forget God when he blesses them? In this light, could it be that when we pray, most of what we are doing is surrendering our wills to God and admitting that it is he who fills all our needs?

5.   In light of the above, is it true that it is only when our rebellion and ingratitude are dealt with that God can safely bless us? Would this help resolve the paradox of God already knowing our needs and yet requiring us to ask him to fulfil them?

2. **Prayer, Intimacy with God, and Listening to Him**

The Bible's stress is not so much on asking God as on approaching him. Thus, the key to true prayer is intimacy with God, which means that we have to deal with the question of sin and how it affects our ability to communicate with him.

In turn, prayer is the key to the release of God's power in our lives, which frees us from sin and gives us the ability to walk in victory and serve him effectively.

1.   Prayer is a two-way street. Not only do we talk to God, but God reaches out to us, speaks to us and requires us to listen to and obey him [John 10:27]. What are the ways that God talks to us? How can we make good use of them?

2.   Read 1Cor 2:9 - 16, Rom 12:1 - 2, and 2 Tim 3:14 - 17. What is the basic way that God speaks to us? In the light of Psalm 1 and Joshua 1:1 - 9, esp. 7 - 9, how should we work it into our prayer lives?

3.   If a person is wilfully disobeying God about simple direct instructions in the Scriptures, can he reasonably expect God to reveal "advanced" things to him? How, then, should we set about learning to discern the voice of God?

4.   In the light of Heb 11:6, 1 John 5:14 - 15 and 2 Peter 1:2 - 4, how does praying in response to the known will of God help release the power of God in our lives?

5.   Read Matt 26:36 - 46. In its light, how should we pray when we are uncertain about God's will and/or fear that it may cut right across what we desire in a situation? Given the points made in James 1:5 - 8, should this uncertainty and/or fear be the norm for our prayer lives?

3. **The ACTS of Prayer and the Power of the Name of Jesus**

ACTS is a common mnemonic used to summarise the main types of prayer: Adoration (worship and praise), Confession (prayers in which we admit to God our guilt or our faith), Thanksgiving, and Supplication   (prayers of request).

1.   Read Matt 6:9 - 13 and Psalm 95:1 - 7. How should we balance the different aspects of prayer? Is the order we see in these passages important?

2.   Read John 14:5 - 14, esp. 6, 10 and 12 - 14 and compare Matt 8: 5 - 9. Given that "in the name of . . ." means "under (and with) the authority of . . . ," what must we do to be able to supplicate God "in the name of Jesus"?

3.   Contrast Acts 16:16 - 18 with Acts 19:13 - 17. Why was there so sharp a
         contrast in the results of these two appeals to the name of Jesus? In the
         light of John 14:12 - 14 and Acts 4:7 - 12, how should we apply this point
         to our lives?

4.   The Ministry of Prayer

When it became necessary for the Jerusalem Church to set aside seven men to do poor relief, the
apostles said: "We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer
and the ministry of the word." [Acts 6:3 - 4.] Prayer (along with the ministry of the word) has
always been central to effective Christian service.

1.   Read Eph 1:13 - 23, which contains one of Paul's prayers for the
         churches in his care. Why did he pray for the Ephesians, and what did
         he request on their behalf?

2.   How would these blessings affect us today? Should we ask God to do
         the same things today? What would happen? (See Eph 3:16 - 21.)

3.   In the light of our findings, what specific steps should we take? When?
         How? Why?

Prayer, under (and with) the authority of Jesus, is powerful. It can release salvation, healing of
the mind and body, liberation from satanic oppression and many other blessings: true prayer
releases the power of God in our lives.

Sisters and Brothers, let us pray.

COUNSELLING

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." (II Cor. 1:3,4)

Counselling is vital to effective Christian leadership, and especially in the work of the cell leader. In Paul's words, God "comforts us in all our troubles" so that we can help others as they confront their own problems. 'Counselling' describes this process of helping and comforting others in God.

In this article, therefore, we will focus our attention on counselling so that as we go about leading cell groups and generally, we will be sensitive to this aspect of leadership, with its peculiar aspects, perspectives and skills. (As with all practical disciplines, the attitude and skills which are necessary can only be developed through facing real-life situations. Such a paper as this can only serve to orient.)

1. THE BACKDROP

Too often, Christians are frustrated, cowed, defeated, apathetic. We have been browbeaten with all the expectations, but, somehow it seems to be a matter of "Do as I say, but not as I do." Where are the effective examples? What of the individual, personal attention which is so vital if skills and attitudes are to be passed on? In short, where are the shepherds?

The truth is that there are some very basic dynamics which must be in place in our leadership if we are to be effective building disciples of Jesus Christ. Counselling is central to these dynamics, and in turn, counselling rests upon six critical factors:-

a.   If we who lead do not know where and how and why we are going -- if we are blind leaders of the blind -- we will lead others right into the ditch.

b.   If there is no openness, trust, and trustworthiness; worse still, if we do not openly love and care for one another, there is no basis for the quality of relationships in which problems and sins can be exposed, perspectives shared, and advice given and received. (See Gal. 6:1,2; Heb. 10:23-25)

c.   If I make a decision for you, then it becomes my responsibility, and the results, good or ill, are mine, not yours.

d.   Problems develop and "present" themselves in ways which fit basic patterns. An exploration of the situation and of the obvious issues, using careful and sensitive tools such as questions and listening eyes and ears, can therefore help us to unearth the roots of the thorny bushes we have bumped into.

e.   If there is an atmosphere of respect and confidentiality, then these roots are far more likely to be exposed. (Patience, however, is always necessary. It is always slow and difficult work when it comes to exposing matters which we find painful or embarrassing.)

f.   The more involved I am digging up the root of my problems, and in developing approaches to solving them, the more likely I am to want to exert the hard and painful effort required.

These six factors are quite general. However, they do not, by themselves, provide solutions: at most, they show us what the basic approach of an effective counsellor is like.

As convinced Christians, we know where the solutions we seek are -- in the Bible. We know that it is "God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) Surely, that is enough!

Unfortunately, it is not. The problem of "how" still remains. Although the Bible does contain answers, it is not a technician's troubleshooting guide, and, rightly so, for people are not machines. Issues of relationships, love, perception, trust, truth, maturity, tact, patience, and so on are vital. Sometimes, for instance, people cannot put their feelings into words, or are too ashamed to tell the truth.

Thank God for the Holy Spirit, The Counsellor! As Jesus himself said: "When he, the Holy Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." (John 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:9-12.)

Whilst we must be diligent and careful Bible students, we must also cultivate a sensitivity to the Spirit of God, who lives in us who are born of the Spirit, and who opens to us the things of God. (It is just as much a supernatural work of the Spirit of God to quicken a text of the Bible to our consciences and show us that it is relevant to this specific situation as it was for him to inspire the men who wrote the Bible.)

In short, we must cultivate sensitivity to the voice of the Spirit of God as he awakens us, ever so gently, to the light and power of the Word of God. As we walk with him, we become more sensitive and confident, and so will be able to develop the awareness and integrity to understand what he is saying to us in counselling situations, and also will have the wisdom from him to know how to best use what he reveals to us.

This, of course, is simply the outline for our walk with God in love, power, truth, and holiness. This aspect of counselling can only develop as we walk with God in our daily lives. There are no short-cuts to maturity.

Against this backdrop, also, the question of referral must arise. As we think of ourselves "with sober judgement in accordance with the measure of faith God has given (us)"   (Rom. 12:13), there will come the time when we meet a problem which is out of our depth. We should then seek out someone who should be more competent to handle the matter in question. The decision

to seek such a counsellor, of course, should be made by the person undergoing counselling, as should all counselling-related decisions.

Sometimes, in fact, professional help is needed. Thank God there are many sound and professional counsellors available to us today.

2. PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

We are dealing with tertiary students in and from the Caribbean, and we are working in a framework oriented towards the building up of effective disciples. We are therefore dealing with those who are being groomed to carry our region on their shoulders well into the twenty-first century, and who reflect the cultural milieu of the Caribbean, with all its strengths and weaknesses. If we are to be successful, we must understand the challenges, problems, issues and tasks which we and our fellow-students face, and we must be able to identify with one another, and to work out and articulate forceful and effective responses.

1.   We have characteristic, low, self-image. We lack confidence, self-respect, and respect for others, so we find it hard to accept how we look, speak, and act. We therefore need to learn to see ourselves as people made in God's own image with all the vast potential, dignity, and worth that this implies.

2.   Our primary (familial) relationships, as a rule, are in disorder. The chaos of family breakdown leads to complicated problems when it comes to sorting out relationships with parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and others we have to deal with. Conflicts are poorly handled and so we never do learn proper teamwork, especially when it comes to relating with authorities. We must therefore work to sort out the root of our problems with authority, conflict-handling, teamwork, and relating to people, especially in our families.

3.   Basic beliefs and values, as a rule, have not been thought through and so are not really our own. They are therefore vulnerable, and easily collapse under pressure of crisis or challenge. Cults, sects, political utopianism and similar groups and speculations thrive on this vulnerability.

4.   Sex is a big problem. Fantasies, pornography, masturbation, fornication, homosexuality, and many other problems are live issues but are often entangled in a web of silence and shame. Passions enslave and cow us into apathy and defeat. We do not know how to have a positive, healthy courtship. A proper perspective on sex, the taming of wild passions, and the conquest of sexual sins must be high on our agenda, if we are to be, and to build, sound disciples of Christ.

5.   Loneliness, mistrust, and a paralysing fear of being betrayed must be dealt with, if we are to understand and value true intimacy and friendship. To make it worse, we have learned all the dirty and cowardly tricks when it comes to handling interpersonal differences -- lies, gossip, slander, half-truths, backstabbing. If we are to live as the body

of Christ, these must be faced and dealt with. (See Matt. 7:1-5; 18:15-20; Eph. 4:15,16.)

6. Issues such as how to work out what to do with our lives against the backdrop of societal expectations, parental ambitions, issues of social status, career options, and the question of Christian service, bedevil us. Often, we are not sure why we are in college, or whether we really want to spend our lives doing what we are studying. The social pressure to go through school and college and get a diploma or degree and thence a high-prestige, high-salary job, often lead us to rush ahead of our personal maturity and development. When problems come up, we lack a perspective and a goal, and so are easily disillusioned. Worse still, sometimes we squelch the voice of God, in pursuit of the world's agenda; prestige, pleasure, and power. (See 1 John 2:15-17.) We must therefore stress the issue of priorities in life, and of sorting out the basic issues before making vital decisions.

7. Matters such as careful management of time, money, efforts, and, generally, of being well-ordered and disciplined are often not dealt with until a crisis erupts. Academic failure, financial distress, being side-tracked into side issues, and other similar problems inevitably result. Discipline, order, and stewardship must be watchwords.

8. Too often we lack competence and skill in basic discipleship. We cannot study our Bible, we do not know how to share the gospel effectively. Our prayer-lives are shaky. We have the bad habit of not participating in the mutual sharing, meeting and encouraging which are vital. (See Heb. 10:23-25.) This reflects the sad state of teaching and traininig and shepherding in the Church in the Caribbean.

As a rule, most common counselling situations will fit under one or more of these readings. I suggest you sit down with other (aspiring) leaders, regularly, to discuss problems in these eight areas. How do the problems arise? How can they be recognized in real-life situations? How do you approach someone about such a problem? How can such problems be dealt with, solved, removed, adjusted to, whatever?

Other problems of a more technical nature, may arise -- persistent depression, deep-seated personality maladjustments, serious demonic oppresssion, and so on. Should such a case arise, I strongly urge that you get help, fast. Being realistic about what we can and what we cannot handle is important.

3. HELPING PEOPLE

Counselling is not just about problems and their solutions, but also about people. People who have problems and need help. People who want help. People who do not. People as they are, not as they 'ought' to be, in short.

In trying to help people, then, we have to learn how to understand people as they are, and how to reach to them, and if it is possible, how to help them.

The first principle of helping people is simple. People can only be helped by you if they want help from you. This means that we cannot force ourselves into their lives, and that we should not trick or manipulate them into asking us to help them. Aside from being a wrong approach, the resentment it builds up will frustrate our attempts to help.

Prayer and encouragement are far more effective, and far less frustrating. Ask God to act into the situation, and to open ways to help. (Since the point is to help, resentment if God uses someone else to help is pointless.)

Relationships, and especially confidence and trust, are also critical. Love people, and care for them. Seek to encourage and to build up -- and make sure you are not projecting the idea that, "If you want my approval, then you must throw your life open to me." Acceptance of people must be unconditional -- look at how Jesus accepted us, sins and all. It is only after acceptance is present, in fact, that sins and other problems can be dealt with.

Being trustworthy is vital. Can you be trusted with a secret? If not, you have no business trying to counsel others. Betrayal of a trust is perhaps the worst form of rejection and abuse of a person. Keep confidential matters confidential, in short.

Integrity is also important. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eyes and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"carries all the force it ever did. It is therefore wise to examine ourselves before God, regularly, as we seek to counsel others.

"What are my attitudes and motives?" should ever be in our hearts, in prayer, before God. It is only when we remove the planks from our own eyes that we can see clearly to help our brothers with specks of sawdust in their eyes.

Experience, finally is basic. If we lack experience of going through tribulation, we simply lack the empathy and feel for how terribly heavy and confusing and painful and embarrassing problems and sins are. Indeed, it is as God comforts us in our own problems that we are enabled to help other people with theirs. Experience, in short, is a basic qualification and preparation. Without it, we are all-too-prone to burden people beyond their ability to bear.

4. PRACTICAL POINTERS

In an essay such as this, it is not possible to say everything. So far, then, we have simply tried to build up a basic framework for counselling. In this, section we will simply list out some quick little points which are helpful in practical situations.

1.   Listen, don't preach.

2.   Guide and reflect. Don't control and decide. In effect, if you decide for someone else, you are responsible for the results of the decision. Make sure your role is that of friend, listener, clarifier, mirror, pointer, compass -- not dictator.

3.   Mirror questions are helpful. Rephrase what was said to you as a question, and pause. As a rule, this helps the other person probe deeper into his or her problem:

" I am not sure what to do."
" You seem to be torn two ways . . . "
" I want to do A, and yet I don't want to."
" There is something about A that both attracts and repels . . . "
" Somehow, I cannot make up my mind about B."
" So, B is a source of tension . . . "
" If I could only clarify B, then A would sort itself out . . . "

4.   Use positive words as much as possible, or at least, neutral ones. If, for instance, above, we had said, "So, you are confused about B," it would imply that we are telling our friend that he is confused! True, perhaps, but not tactful.

5.   Ask for opinions, and resist the temptation to tell people what is wrong, and what should be done. This cuts off the opening-up process (and, maybe, the NEXT item was the critical one!) and moves you into the driver's seat.

6.   Patiently wait until you both have a clear picture before looking at possible solutions. This is especially true of the temptation to fire off a Bible verse or two prematurely.

7.   Let the person confront his own words, especially where contradictions come out, but do so very, very gently and tactfully.

8.   When using Scripture, ask the person what he or she sees. Use questions to clarify and correct, avoiding overt correction as much as possible, so you help the person to correct himself or herself.

9.   It is wise to clarify what the goals are for each counselling interview and for the overall counselling situation. Do not impose your own goals or use "hidden agenda" tactics.

10.   Be as positive, accepting, tactful, encouraging, unassertive, confidential and trustworthy as possible -- treat the other person just as you would want to be treated [Matt 7:12].

11.   Try to clarify the who, what, where, when, why, and how, within the limits of what you need to know to help and what it is safe for you to know [Gal. 6:1, 2].

12.   Be unshockable -- ANYTHING can come out: a criminal record, hatred, hypocrisy, homosexuality, or worse. Whatever comes out, communicate the loving acceptance of Christ [Rom 5:6 - 11].

13.   Think of other useful points to add to this list. Read some good books, attend a seminar or two, discuss counselling issues with other leaders. Put whatever is useful into practice.

5.   Where to go From Here

Counselling is a vast field -- one can make a career of it. Unfortunately, we have neither the time nor the space to go into more details. Besides, one only really learns to counsel by counselling. Work through the following practical exercises, which are intended to make the plunge easier:

1.   Jesus was the Master Counsellor. Read the case studies in John chapters three, four and eight. Why did Jesus approach these three cases in such different ways? Is there a basic underlying method? How could we apply it today?

2.   Visit a good Christian Bookstore, and look at the books in the Counselling, Courtship, Family Life and Cults sections. Which authors seem to be most sound, clear and practical? What are the basic points they make? How can you apply them?

3.   Personal Evangelism involves counselling, and many counselling situations require evangelist counselling as people work to resolve their problems. Discuss how the sharing of the gospel and the counselling process can be integrated.

4.   List some typical problems faced by college students, set up some role-playing situations, and see how the principles and insights work out. Discuss the results. How does the gospel fit in?

5.   Next time a friend shares his or her troubles with you, use the approaches, perspectives and pointers you have learned as you try to help.

6.   How can counselling be integrated into your ministry as a cell leader, a committee member or just simply as a Christian?

Counselling is the art of helping people. We therefore need experience, some basic insights and skills. Practice, therefore, is one key.

The other key is simple -- prayer: God changes situations and hearts when we pray. Let us, therefore, learn, practice and pray.

PART THREE:
General Christian Leadership Skills

This final section is a bit more advanced than the rest of the course. In it, apologetics and planning/managing skills are introduced, in a way that is designed to be enough to get leaders in training started, but of course each of these areas could easily be the focus of a career. (We have also attached, as an enrichment module, a paper that undertakes a strategic survey of the fulness vision of Eph. 1:9 – 10, 17 – 23 and 4:9 – 16. This final, but optional, topic gives the overall strategic picture, within which cell leadership training, discipleship training and faithful Christian service take place.]

So, students are initially invited to tackle the areas through two to three "overview" sessions, reading and discussing as they go. To develop skills rather than just familiarity, it would be necessary to augment such discussions by assigning leaders in training to work through case studies and/or role play exercises, perhaps in small groups that make presentations to the larger group of leaders in training. Very fruitful discussions can then follow.

Depending on the level of the leaders in training, this more advanced section could be incorporated into initial training retreats and workshops. If it is felt that this is a bit of an overload, perhaps the cell of cell leaders or regular depth training retreats could be used to build these skills. But, given the vital importance of planning, handling intellectual challenges and of the strategic thinking that we need as we tackle the task of discipling the nations in the Third Christian Millennium, these issues should not be neglected.

(The modules could also be used to bridge to more advanced leadership training, perhaps in preparation for working with an executive committee or with a ministry team such as a drama group. Some adventurous leaders may even wish to tackle some of these topics in their own cells. It would be highly instructive for them to share their experiences with the other cell leaders!)

AN APOLOGETICS PRIMER
GEM '85, this rev. 02:08:06b.1

> "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . ."   (1 Peter 3:15)

Peter exhorts us that, as Christian disciples, we must be prepared to give a reasonable answer for our eternal hope. Thus, we see both the task of Apologetics and its method. For, thoughtful Christians should be able to cogently respond to those who ask for the *reasons* behind our commitment of faith; and we must always do so gently and respectfully.

However, too often Christian believers in the Caribbean are not sure of what the Faith is, or of why we believe it. So, when we are challenged we often seem to be vague, insecure, confused, or even foolish. As a direct result, those who distort or oppose the gospel have been able to acquire an unwarranted aura of credibility, and have cast many people in the Caribbean — including many Christians — into confusion, unnecessary doubt, or even outright deception.

As a further damaging result the gospel often appears to be irrelevant or even absurd to many of the most thoughtful people in our region. This obviously hampers our witness — "Why should we take you seriously?" — but it also cripples our ability to think, speak, work and lead with confidence in the school, on the campus, in the workplace and in the wider community. In short, when we are not "prepared to give an answer . . . for the hope that [we] have," it undermines our ability to be salt and light in a sin-darkened, deceived and confused region that hungers for a credible framework for thinking about truth, values and the way to build a desirable and sustainable future.

So, as educated Caribbean Christians, we must learn to handle key intellectual challenges and issues that we are likely to encounter in living, witnessing, studying, working and contributing to community development. Such issues typically hinge on: (1) the reasonableness of the Christian faith and lifestyle in today's high-tech, post-modern scientific age; (2) the validity and proper use of the Bible as a primary authority for belief and behaviour; (3) specific issues, such as secularism, the rise of the post-modern age, or the recently proposed Islamic alternative for understanding our past and building our future.

In this primer, therefore, we will focus on: (1) the role of faith in all our reasoning; (2) the authority of the Bible: (3) several specific strategic issues in the Caribbean — with a view to helping us to begin to think through key issues as we prepare to serve Christ effectively in the Caribbean in our generation.

1.   Reason and Belief: Towards Reasonable Faith

Since by definition *issues* are matters of argument, let us start by asking how arguments persuade, and how some arguments prove (or fail to prove) their conclusions. In so doing, we

will see the vital role faith plays in <u>all</u> human thinking and reasoning. This will set the stage for the more specific issues.

First, we can easily see that arguments make three main persuasive appeals: (1) to **"facts" and logic**, (2) to **authorities**, and (3) to **emotions**.[4] Of the three, only the first actually has the potential to *prove* its conclusions. For, emotional appeals (although often quite effective) cannot ground any conclusions whatsoever. Likewise, no authority is better than the facts and reasoning behind his or her opinions.

This is why we should examine claimed facts and inferences from them carefully, to see if "facts" are true and representative of the truth, and that conclusions follow logically from these *premises*.[5] Second, since appeals to authority are a practical necessity for real world arguments[6] we must discipline ourselves to authenticate the "authorities" we appeal to; and we should also be alert to bias, mistakes, debatable assumptions and other limitations. Most of all, while an emotional response may well rest on an accurate *perception* of a situation, we must always be wary of being blinded by our feelings, fears, ideals, prejudices, assumptions, impulses, lusts, greed and/or envy, or even by unmet needs.

As Luke records in Acts 17:11, the First Century Berean Jews were a good example of such an open-minded but critically aware approach:

> The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.
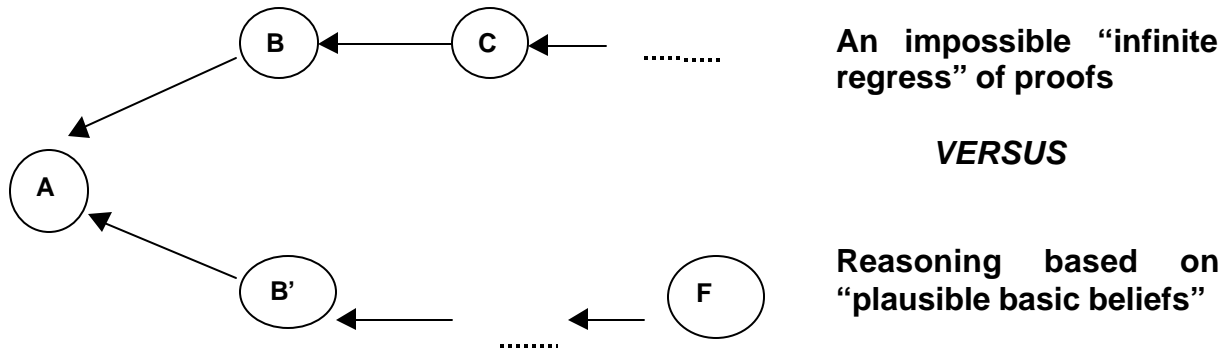
This example of critically aware, reasonable faith leads to the second main issue. For, faith and reason are often cast in opposition to one another, as if faith always lacks adequate reason, and as if one can reason without faith. Indeed, the two are often said to be contradictory.

This view is false. For, as Jesus points out in Luke 6:39 – 40, blind faith is liable to lead us about as far as the nearest ditch. Further, once we try to *prove* a claim A, we need further claims and/or evidence B to establish it. But B needs C, and so on. (Philosophers call this an infinite regress.) So, what we always do, sooner or later, is to accept some things, F say, as "true" without further proof, whether consciously or unconsciously — "axioms," "presuppositions," "obvious facts," "intuitive knowledge," "self-evident truths," "properly basic beliefs" or whatever else we may call them:

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[4] Cf. Aristotle's *The Rhetoric.* "Facts" is used to distinguish perceptions or claims from <u>established</u> facts. (NB: One has a right to believe that one's *direct* sense perceptions, memory etc. are typically accurate, but are subject to the possibility of error.)

[5] If, granting premises P, then a conclusion Q must *necessarily* be true, Q follows logically from P: P => Q.

[6] Not least, because none of us has the time or wisdom to prove for him- or her-self the accumulated learning of the ages.

B ← C ← ....

An impossible "infinite regress" of proofs

A

VERSUS

B'

F

Reasoning based on "plausible basic beliefs"

F, then, is our **"faith-point,"** from which we begin our thinking and reasoning. For instance, most people take for granted: (1) that there is a real world, (2) that other people have minds, (3) that we can therefore significantly communicate with one another, and (4) that error exists (which directly implies that truth exists and that there is a real world to be in error about[7]). Other things are then accepted or rejected based on such "plausible basic beliefs."

That is, if we try to prove everything, we can prove nothing: even proofs must start from faith. Thus, faith and reasoning are necessary and interconnected components in our thinking, rather than mutually hostile competitors in the battle for our hearts and minds. For, all of us must live by faith — whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or New Ager; Marxist, Secularist, Relativist or Scientist.

The idea that Science in particular is shot through with faith is jarring at first sight. But it is quite true: for, we first infer scientific theories as educated guesses that work to "explain" observed patterns in the world. Then, we test such models for their ability to predict new observations. If such a theory/model/ explanation accurately predicts the observations made in a wide variety of tests, it is held to be "verified."

In effect, we argue: "IF *Theory*, THEN *Observations*; *Observations*, SO *Theory*." The underlying logic is thus the same as that of: "IF *Tom is a pig*, THEN *Tom is an animal*; *Tom is an animal,*[8] SO *Tom is a pig*" — an obvious fallacy, the affirming of the consequent. [That is, we tend to confuse the logic of implication (A is *sufficient* for B to be true: A => B), with that of equivalence (A is both *necessary and sufficient* for B; that is, B =>A as well as A =>B,[9] written: A ⇔ B).]

Clearly, the capability of a scientific theory to predict observations cannot be a test of its ultimate truth. For, Science can only argue to *the best current explanation.*[10] So, while scientific methods may help us to discover and test truths, the theories/models/explanations and empirical findings of Science are always provisional — open to clarification and correction. (The classic case is

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[7] Therefore, we should humbly face the possibility that we may be in error, but insist on good reason for accepting "corrections" to important beliefs. Cf. Trueblood, *General Philosophy*, pp. 47 – 52, ff.

[8] Say, a cat.

[9] In a valid implication, P => Q, P is a *sufficient condition* for Q and Q is a *necessary condition* for P.

[10] Charles S. Peirce called this process of argument by proposed *best explanation/model/theory* "abduction." In deductive arguments, one reasons from "facts" to their logical implications, which are thus "proved" from the "facts." By contrast, in Science we argue that if certain hypotheses were true, then certain observed (and/or predicted) "facts" would follow as direct implications. Thus, the observed/predicted "facts" provide "support" — but not actual proof — for such hypotheses/explanations.

Newton's Laws of Motion: they withstood every test for nearly two hundred years, then had their limitations sharply exposed between 1880 and 1930.[11])

The key to understanding these limits of scientific thinking lies in the two-way, asymmetric link between explanations/models/theories and the bodies of observations they explain/predict. First, models *logically entail* observations; but observations can only provide *provisional empirical support* for the models. Second, such explanations/models/theories [E/M/T] must face two critical further tests: (1) self-consistency; (2) supportive/challenging relationships to exiting bodies of accepted theory [BOAT]:
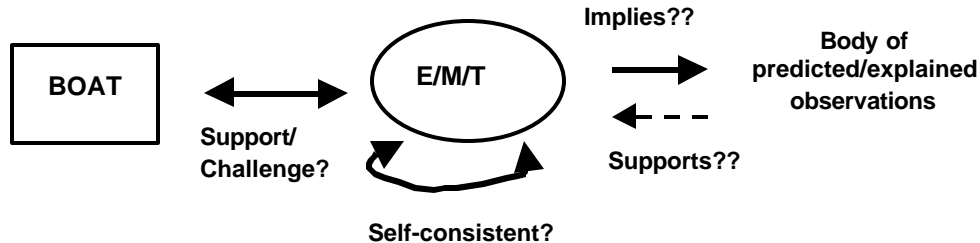
For, if a scientific model is not consistent with itself each half refutes the other; so it must be false. If it is consistent and easily integrates into the existing body of accepted theories, there is mutual reinforcement. However, occasionally a new model or theory may provide a superior [perhaps, the only] explanation of existing observations and accurately predicts fresh ones, but is inconsistent with accepted theories. In that case, the new theory becomes a challenger to the accepted body of theory, and a Scientific Crisis and/or Revolution may follow. (This is how Quantum Theory and Relativity became the accepted fundamental physical explanations for the motion of bodies between 1900 and 1930.[12] And, today, Intelligent Design is challenging Darwinism as the best explanation for the apparently irreducible complexity of life-forms, e.g. the bacterial flagellum — a molecular scale, electrically powered outboard motor.)

So, scientific explanations, at best, give provisional knowledge. At worst, they may become little more than a clever attempt to explain away the cosmos — everything from hydrogen to humans — on materialistic philosophical assumptions. In either case, Science deeply embeds faith; it should therefore leave room for reasonable doubt and debate about its current "best explanations/models/theories."

Many people, however, sharply reject such an organic link between Science and faith, because for them "Science" is synonymous with "rationality," or even "knowledge" — and "faith," with "irrational or intellectually dishonest, closed-minded belief," or even "ignorant superstition and prejudice." Nevertheless, the point plainly still stands: scientists, too, work by the light of faith (cf. Thomas Kuhn's paradigm concept in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*).

We may thus safely conclude that each of us, consciously or unconsciously, holds to a set of plausible basic beliefs, which define our different *worldviews* — different ways of understanding/interpreting ultimate reality, the world and ourselves. Fortunately, our basic

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[11] The case also strongly shows that the power of a theory/model to explain/predict observations (and even to guide us in developing technologies to control or influence events) cannot be a proof of its ultimate truth.

[12] Newtonian Dynamics has been retained as a relatively simple model for the motion of large, slow moving bodies.

beliefs need not be arbitrary; for we can be open to correction in light of experience and/or the discovery of inconsistencies[13] or other logical errors. However, we must also be aware that even if certain ideas "make sense" or "seem absurd," such perceptions may well owe more to debatable assumptions, or gaps in our knowledge, or mistakes in reasoning — or even to outright bias and closed mindedness — than to what holds in the real world.

The Early Church's experience with Jews and Greeks provides a good example of this problem. Often, people were not willing to listen to eyewitness testimony about Jesus' life, death and resurrection, because it did not fit in with their preconceptions about God. Five hundred eyewitnesses notwithstanding, they had closed their minds! (See 1 Cor. 1:18-25, 15:1-20; also Acts 17:16-33.)

Plainly, we need to beware of the fallacy of the closed mind. On the other hand, since it is impossible to "be neutral" on the big questions — we would then face an infinite regress of proofs — our intellectual commitments need to be open-minded, critically aware and honest. Therefore, as educated Christians, we should think through our own basic commitments, and seek to bring those we argue with to the point where they too can be aware of their own core beliefs and values; so that they in turn may recognise their need for repentance and to cry out to God, who "rewards those who earnestly seek him." [Heb 11:6.]

Of course, this requires diligent study, careful reasoning, humility, patience, prayer, and last but not least, courage. For, we must not forget that Stephen was both the first Christian Apologist [Acts 6:8 – 10], and — precisely because of the irresistible force of the Spirit-filled wisdom of his case — the first Martyr [Acts 6:11 – 8:1]. But equally, it was one of his chief opponents who — through his own encounter with the risen Christ — would take up the torch of Spirit-anointed truthful wisdom and run with it: Saul of Tarsus.

2.   The Bible: Authenticity and Authority in an Age of Suspicion

Traditionally, Christians hold that the Bible is "God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) Thus, we see the Bible as being the recorded Word of God that breathes out his redemptive, life-transforming, perfect truth, love, moral purity, wisdom, authority, and power.

Consequently, we understand ourselves and our world in light of the biblical plot-line[14]:

❑   God is the eternal, holy, perfect, all-powerful, all-knowing, loving Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos, who made humanity in his image, to be his stewards of the earth.

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[13] Logical inconsistencies affirm and deny (usually implicitly) the same claim, resulting in confusion. For example, the claim "there are no absolute truths" is itself an absolute truth-claim. It therefore *refutes itself*. No good comes of such confusion, so we must purge our thinking of contradictions.

[14] Cf. UCCF Statement of Faith, or similar creedal statements, for specific Scripture references.

❑ This stewardship implied the power of choice, thus necessarily the potential for virtue or vice. Unfortunately, our first ancestors chose to walk in their own way, and ever since, each of us has ratified that choice through our own wilfully sinful behaviour — which wreaks havoc on our own selves, other people and the whole earth.

❑ So, naturally, all of us are subjects of God's just anger at sin. However, in love, God made a way for us to be reconciled to himself and so seeks to rescue us from the enslaving and destructive power of sin.

❑ To effect this plan, God chose a particular people (the Jews) and joined covenant with them, creating a culture within which he sent his prophets with his words that guided them through times of faithfulness and unfaithfulness, blessing, and judgement, preparing the way for his chosen Messiah — Spirit-empowered deliverer.

❑ In due course, that Messiah/Christ was sent by God: Jesus of Nazareth, the unique Son of God. He loved, served, taught, healed and delivered from Satanic bondage. But he was rejected and declared worthy of death (as a blasphemer) by the leaders of his own people, and "suffered under Pontius Pilate," who — for political expediency — unjustly condemned him to death, having declared Jesus innocent of sedition against Rome.

❑ But, in dying on a cross, Jesus bore our sins and brought redemption for us. Then, triumphing over the Devil, he rose from the dead as Lord. In ascending to his Father, he sent out his church into the world under the power of his Spirit, with the Good News that freely brings forgiveness, reconciliation, salvation, healing, wholeness and liberation to all men who will but receive it.

❑ So, even now, through the church, the Risen Lord works to fill all things with his grace and glory, creating a foretaste of what shall be in perfect fulness at his Coming.[15] Then, he shall establish his Eternal Kingdom in its fully manifested power and glory, triumphing over all human and demonic rebellion and chaos.

Few things are as controversial today as these traditional, Bible-based Christian claims!

Basically, they have been challenged from three directions:

1. Some feel that during the centuries of copying by hand from one text to another and due to "inevitable distortions" in the translation process, the original text "must" have been badly distorted or even totally lost.   Thus, such people believe that we can have no way of knowing that the Bible's story line is authentic.

2. It is claimed, often by learned Theologians (such as Dominic Crossan and the Jesus Seminar, or Bishop John Spong of New Jersey, and many others) that much of the Bible is simply a collection of pre-scientific myths and pious forgeries, which has to

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[15] See the companion paper, *Fulnss and our Mandate*, for an expansion of this theme, with a strategic framework for its application to the reformation and sound development of the Caribbean.

be "demythologized" and "reconstructed" before use. In particular, such thinkers are suspicious of the idea that History, under the Lordship of Christ, is moving along a path from Creation and fall, through redemption and witness to all nations, towards a culmination at the Second Coming.

3. Some argue that the Bible is factually inaccurate, that is, it does not square with what we know today about the world in the past — especially in Genesis, in its prophecies, and reports of miracles. That is, they hold that (based on our ability to reconstruct the past through historical, archaeological and scientific investigations) we can discredit and dismiss the Bible's claims.

The first challenge is easiest to deal with. Simply put, we have a mountain of ancient textual evidence to the Bible (in both the original languages and ancient translations), which enables us to be reasonably confident that we know what the original text was, in all essential details at all essential points.   Moreover, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the original languages, are still understood and studied today, so we can easily check the accuracy of any particular translation. Of the many available good modern English versions, the Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, the New King James Version and the New International Version are generally highly respected. (For more details, consult J. McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, or F.F. Bruce's *The Books and the Parchments.*)

The second is somewhat more technical and not usually relevant to laymen — unless they have been influenced by the claims of the Jesus Seminar or the like. Suffice to say that, for example, the idea that Moses' books were written in the tenth to sixth centuries BC originally depended upon the assumption that writing had not been invented in Moses' day; a theory which has long since exploded. Similarly, there is little or no sound reason to conclude that the New Testament documents are pious forgeries dating to the second century. In general, such sceptical scholarly theories are based upon materialistic and evolutionary assumptions that are debatable, or even arbitrary, and which we are by no means compelled by the evidence to accept without question. For details, see J. McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, and various articles in *The New Bible Dictionary*, IVP.

The third objection is more fundamental. The Bible is full of reports about the supernatural works of a sovereign God, in creation, revelation, salvation, healing, and deliverance. It is often claimed that such reports cannot be true, either because they contradict the scientifically established laws of nature or else known facts about the past.

Clearly, the issue is not one of proof beyond all doubt or dispute — no such "proofs" exist. Rather, the issue is whether it is intellectually honest or sensible to believe a book making claims such as the above.

The best place to begin, as always, is with Jesus, his life, death, and claims. Luke, in beginning his Gospel, for instance, claims:

[S]ince I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you . . . *so that* you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.   [Luke 1:3, 4; emphasis added.]

Luke, then, starts out by saying his writings are a carefully researched, accurate and orderly account of the life of Jesus and — taking in the Acts, also addressed to Theophilus — also of the early history of the church; based upon eyewitness testimony and (apparently) records of such testimony. His main aim was to provide warrant for Christian faith, and he argued that an accurate, orderly account of what happened to Jesus and his followers would be quite sufficient.

This is a claim to be writing objective history, and within the lifetime of eyewitnesses. If these claims are false, "Luke" is out and out guilty of fraud, however pious.

But Luke is open to checking, as he tosses out names, dates, and places with abandon, even (in the "we" passages in Acts) implying that he was himself present as a participant in some of the events he records. So, if he were, say, a second century forger, he would be likely indeed to get the facts wrong.

At one stage this was commonly felt to be so, "but it is generally admitted by scholars today that the author's historical accuracy has been vindicated." [J. N. Geldenhuys, "Luke, Gospel of," *New Bible Dictionary*, IVP, 1976, p. 757.] F.F. Bruce adds: "The historical trustworthiness of Luke's account has been amply confirmed by archaeological discovery. While he has apologetic and theological interests [mostly, to commend the Christian faith to the Romans as not being a security threat and as being based on a true understanding of God's intervention into human history in the person and work of Jesus], these do not detract from this detailed accuracy." ["Acts, Book of the," *NBD*, p. 11. Parenthetical summary added.] For instance, it has been pointed out that his account of Paul's voyage and shipwreck in Acts 27 provides one of the best accounts of ancient seafaring. Indeed, the course of the voyage, the weather systems that led to the shipwreck and its likely location can be reconstructed from the account!

This pattern of confirmed accuracy is vital when we turn to the main line of the account. For, accuracy, as has been often said, is a habit — as are carelessness and deceitfulness. And, Luke's main plot-line (while tossing out abundant and well authenticated incidental references to life in First Century Palestine and the wider Mediterranean) weaves momentous claims into the basic fabric of the times: the birth, life, teachings, miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus and the origin and progress of a church which testified to these things, did similar miracles, and could not be stopped, not even by force. Indeed, the claim that the Church's opponents had to resort to force, even within walking-distance of Jesus' now empty tomb, is itself significant.

Luke contends that all of this is fact, carefully researched and orderly presented fact. If he was wrong, surely the church's opponents would have been able to ram his false or inaccurate claims back down his throat, followed by copious helpings of crow!

Instead, we read of Paul, challenged by Festus: "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane!" His reply: "I am not insane, most excellent Festus . . . What I am saying is true and reasonable. The King [Agrippa] is familiar with these things, and I can speak

freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner." (Acts 26:25, 26.)

Here we see Paul, before his accusers, preaching to his judges, and appealing to their knowledge of the well-known facts. To my mind, this is plainly not consistent with the idea that the reports are mere tall tales, pious forgeries made up long after the eyewitnesses had died out. Moreover, five hundred people simply do not suffer the same hallucination at the same time, nor are hallucinations able to confer miraculous powers, or utterly change murderous persecutors into bold missionaries, as Luke records. Tellingly, Luke claims that the church's opponents could not deny the life-transforming impact of the gospel, especially the powerful miracles wrought in the name of Jesus.[16] (Cf. Acts 4:14: "since they could see the [formerly crippled] man who had been healed *standing* . . . there was nothing they could say.")

We, then, must make up our minds as to whether we can accept Luke's record. If we reject it, we must know why — and why we do so in the teeth of his demonstrated, detailed historical reliability. (We hardly need to detain ourselves with the circular argument that miracles are "impossible" because they violate "exceptionless laws of nature." For, why should it be "impossible" for the All-Powerful, All-Wise Creator of the cosmos to sometimes act beyond the usual course of nature as we — all too fallibly — perceive it?)

If, on the other hand, we accept the Lukan claim, it implies that the New Testament is the authentic record of Jesus, his life, teachings, claims death and resurrection, and of the church that bore witness to him. In turn, this validates the Old Testament record of how God acted into the flow of history to prepare the way for just such a Saviour as Jesus of Nazareth. [Cf. 2 Peter 1:1-3:18, esp. 1:12 – 2:3, & 3:1 -18.]

If it is credible at all, the Bible is the Word of God. The choice, with its implications and consequences, is ours.

3.   **Apologetics in the Caribbean**

We live, think, work and evangelise in the Caribbean. We must therefore be sensitive to the yet unhealed wounds from our past — Christianity, slavery and colonialism were all brought here from Europe, for instance — and we must work towards dealing with the issues facing the church today, in the twenty-first century. Six issues — sectarianism, political messianism, the media and education, evolutionary materialism, post-modern relativism, and Islam, will therefore be focussed upon, not because they are exhaustive but because they are representative and important.

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[16] For that matter, the gospel yet changes lives, and many miracles in the name of Jesus have continued to happen down through history, right up to our own time. [Cf. Acts 4:7 – 12, and Acts 9:1 – 38 (nb. 24:1 - 26:32, esp. 26:4 - 8, 9 - 23).]

3.1   The Sectarian Civil War

Too often in the Caribbean, church is pitted against church in a vicious war over doctrine and over followers. As a direct result, many simply dismiss the church as a whole, and the gospel — "If you Christians can't even agree among yourselves, why should we believe any of you?"

I suppose this is part of why Jesus prayed that we would "be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:23.) Clearly, we have to learn to accept one another in Christ, and to show the love that is the proof of the discipleship we profess. (John 13:35.) Thank God that the UCCF, YFC and many other groups, over the past several decades, have (however imperfectly) modelled a framework that can show the way forward:

- Unity in essentials (such as our understanding of God as Creator and Sovereign Lord; the Person and Work of Christ; the Scriptures; the Gospel and why and how we must be saved — cf. the UCCF Statement of Faith);

- Respect for diversity, and room for dialogue and personal convictions on other important (but less essential) concerns and issues;

- Balanced by a stress on faithful discipleship under the Great Commission, that leads to a life of service, love and purity in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

If such a model is to work out on the ground across the Caribbean, the area of Bible study will need much attention. For, many of our doctrinal and practical quarrels, frankly, are rooted in sloppy interpretation that does not understand or respect context, language, logic or the culture gap between two or three thousand years ago and today.

For example, some sects reject the historic Christian understanding of Jesus' claim to be the Incarnate, unique Son of God: that is, that Our Risen Lord is the Second Person of the Trinity. What is sad is that members of such groups often fail to realise why the Church, upon much careful reflection, has come to see that the real alternative would be to conclude (with the Jewish leaders who put him to death) that he was a blasphemer.

Mark 2:1-12 will make this point clear. Jesus is teaching in a house, and a paralytic is let down, through a hole in the roof. He pauses and says to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Some teachers of the Mosaic Law were present, and reacted sharply, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking, *but did not respond:* "No, you are mistaken, [17] it is not God alone who can forgive sins — so can I." Rather, he healed the paralytic as a visible sign of this power.

Some may object that an account of a miracle cannot record an event that actually happened in a certain house in Capernaum some time around AD 30; it "must" be a pious myth. To such, we

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[17] Sin is at its root an offense against God, so indeed it is God who ultimately must forgive it.

must ask on what grounds they reject the possibility of miracles? If the response is that they violate laws of nature, we must point out that the God who made nature plainly has power to act beyond the usual course of nature.

Others may feel that, perhaps Jesus did say such things; but, although a great teacher and reformer, he was clearly mistaken. The problem with this objection (as C. S. Lewis so often pointed out) is the sheer magnitude of the "error" — it would immediately call his sanity into question; or worse. And, that simply will not wash.

Yet others, perhaps influenced by the Jesus Seminar, may feel that the whole story is made up by second century church leaders to respond to their own times.

To these, we point out that: (1) there is no solid evidence for such a charge; (2) the canonical gospels simply do not play to the debates of the second century (or even the later First Century); and (3) the history of the Church, from the First Century on, knows of no other Jesus than the one who worked miracles, made amazing claims about his Person and Work, who died on a cross for our sins, and who rose from the dead in power and glory. This is attested, not only by the New Testament documents — for which we now have significant manuscript evidence and citations dating to the very edge of the First Century — but also by the early and later Church Fathers, by opponents, and by secular historians and commentators.

We then see a stark choice: is Jesus our Divine Lord, a demonic Liar, or a crazed Lunatic? No other significant option exists — Jesus saw to that.

In the text we are examining, this is very clear: either Jesus is able to exercise a prerogative that belongs only to God, or else he is a crazed or demonised blasphemer,[18] for he clearly claims that his ability to heal, in this case, is a proof of his power to forgive sin. And, in the end, only God can have this power.

In our dealing with such doctrinal controversies, then, we should use the power of inductive Bible study to unearth what the Bible actually says, as opposed to what people may claim it says. Once we clarify the significance of what happens or is said, we can apply it to our own situations. As is clear from the above, this approach can yield startling insights and forces momentous decisions.

But also, we must go beyond mere arguments and controversies, so that "speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." [Eph. 4:15 – 16.]

If we do otherwise, we will simply be to be traitors to the church and its message in the wider community, contributing to its rejection of the true Messiah, resulting ultimately in ruin.

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[18] Indeed, it was on the charge of blasphemy that Jesus was put to death [John 5:17 – 30; Mark 14:53 – 64], and Christians have always viewed the resurrection as a vindication of his claims to be the Son of God [Acts 2:31 – 41; Rom. 1:1 – 4]. (The *Talmud*, written by later Jewish leaders, is inadvertently consistent — it accepts that Jesus indeed performed miracles in First Century Palestine, but explains them by accusing him of deception and magic. And even these accusations confirm the Gospel reports: cf. Luke 11:14 – 28, Matt 12:1 – 45, John 10:22 – 42, nb. Jesus' challenge in vv. 37, 38.)

3.2   Political Messianism

Often, politicians in our region project themselves as messiahs, anointed to lead us into new promised lands. However, as Christians, we know that it is only God who can save us from all the bitter fruit of our sin and selfishness, and it is only God who knows what is in men's hearts and can thus know the exact motives or attitudes of those who question or oppose him. (See 1 Sam. 16:7.)

Therefore, when mere men project themselves as messiahs able to deliver our people into a new age, free of want, misery and suffering, and thus demand unquestioning support, or claim that politics is a sphere in which questions of right or wrong are irrelevant, they demand loyalties which properly belong only to God.

The first commandment still stands: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Deut. 5:7.)

Marxian ideology — now lying in a shallow and noisily stirring grave — added to this potent idolatrous brew a philosophical framework, based upon materialism. For, starting from the basic stance of rejecting any notion of a personal, Sovereign God, it asserted that matter and the purposeless laws that govern matter are all that exists. It then claimed that social injustice is due to how some men have invented the notion of property and have used it to steal the fruit of other people's work to fatten themselves, inventing complex social structures, notably religious and political/economic ones, to legitimise their action. The proposed solution was revolution: the oppressed must throw off their chains and violently seize what "rightfully" is theirs.

Unfortunately, as the aftermath of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 – 1991 revealed, Marxist revolutions have simply substituted one oppressive, unjust and often incompetent ruling class for another. So, the collapse of the East Bloc has for the moment settled the debate over whether centrally planned economies outperform market-based economies: across time, they have not.

However, as Bob Goudzwaard points out in *Capitalism and Progress*, the underlying greed and oppression issues first raised by Marx and other Socialists remain unresolved. For, those who own or manage the capital assets of a firm often think only in terms of maximising profits. They thus tend to neglect the legitimate rights, needs and interests of other stakeholders: workers and their families, suppliers (especially when their bargaining power is weak), customers, the wider community, even the environment.

Therefore, in recent years, the ideological and moral controversies that have dogged capitalism from its inception have simply moved on to other grounds. These include: market failures and environmental damage; [un-]sustainability of development and North/South globalisation agendas; capitalist/patriarchal oppression of workers, women, black people, and other racial/cultural minorities. (Nor have the usual noises about profit maximisation as an efficiency measure put the critics to flight, for the key theorems relate to idealised, not real world markets.) That is, the underlying theme of oppression/liberation remains unresolved, and the underlying materialistic thinking and hankering after political messiahs still set the agenda for public debate.

This is fundamentally problematic, for secularist political messianism/liberationism rejects God, as its first step in thinking. So, however good the analysis may be at particular points — and it can be uncomfortably close to the truth, even though such thinkers have more than their fair share of misleading arguments — such thinking has no clear and firm basis for respecting truth, rights, and values; even though it often reflects a splendid sensitivity to the cry of the oppressed.

Now, it is an easily observed fact that we naturally become angry and complain or quarrel when we are treated unfairly, though we often fail to live up to the standards we thus set for others. That is, as C. S. Lewis was fond of pointing out, how and why we quarrel reveals that we expect other people to respect our rights — binding moral claims on others. In short, in practice, we all accept that at least some moral principles are objectively binding. Unfortunately, at the same time, we often wish to escape the force of such claims against our own selves!

As a result, it is an all-too- common human failing to be busy about sawdust in the next person's eye, when we have planks sticking out of our own eyes. [Matt. 7:1 – 5; cf. 18:15 – 18.]

It is therefore quite easy for political messianists to highlight the failings and hypocrisies of others. But, more importantly, it is quite another thing for would-be saviours of society to give an adequate basis for the binding nature of our rights. For, what "rights" can "an accidental by-product thrown off by the random chaos of a chance world" ultimately claim against those who hold the levers of power in the community?

This is crucial, as secularist thinking naturally tends to reduce morality to subjective feelings driven by accidents of genetics or of culture, religion and history. Would-be political messiahs therefore typically resort to manipulative media and political power games as they attempts to deliver their promised utopias. But, since secularists reduce truth to subjective perceptions, and cut rights down to being mere entitlements granted through control of the levers of political, legal and regulatory power, they are usually blind to the planks in their own eyes — their own fallen, sinful, deceitful and desperately wicked hearts. [Cf. Jeremiah 17:5 – 11, esp. 9 – 10, and Deut. 8:17 - 20.]

Consequently, secularist utopian reformers all too easily fall prey to the corrupting temptations of power. For example, they often ruthlessly exploit media access and academic/ideological power to push through their policy agendas — often based on questionable or even deceptive scientific, factual, moral or legal claims. In some instances, they have even abused the power of police agencies and the courts — and not just Nazis and Communists, either.

As a result, public policy dominated or controlled by such ideologues soon drifts away from sound foundations, in pursuit of ever-receding mirages, often ending up in shipwreck. This has already become all too clear in the case of the Marxists, who have now left behind the daunting challenge of repairing the political, social, cultural, economic, educational and environmental havoc created by forty to seventy years of ruinous rule by tyrannical Communist Dictators.

Similarly, should they gain or hold power for long enough, bitter fruit will also come from the current crop of would-be political messiahs, precisely because they have lost sight of their own

inner corruption and need for redemption, inner renewal and transformation through the only true Messiah. For, as the great Russian writer and dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, observed — consciously echoing the ancient prophets — the line between good and evil passes, not between classes and nations, but right through the individual human heart.

The main question, in short, is NOT over particular issues, theories, rights and policies, but rather over who is Lord: man, or Jesus? (For, as Rom. 13:1-7 points out, governing authorities are servants and stewards of God, responsible for upholding justice, rewarding good, and punishing evil. When those who hold power drift from this mooring, they inevitably follow a road to ruin.)

In short, the state is, and must always be, accountable to God. For, it is only he who can truly establish justice in the community.

3.3   The Media and Education

Issues of communication, control, credibility and clarity are critical if the church is to speak effectively to the people of the Caribbean during this generation. If we fail to be clear, credible, and relevant, we will simply be isolated and dismissed as other sources and their messages take over our region. For, a message is comprehended only by those who find it clear; it is believable only to those who give its sources a high credibility; it is effective only for those who find it relevant.

Unfortunately, credibility is not the same as truth — it is a perception that a particular source is believable. As well we know from the study of Rhetoric, messages and arguments can be extremely persuasive, even if they are not true or sound. So, demagogues and other misleaders have long since discovered that if one tickles itching ears with what they want to hear, self-deceived people will believe it and trust you, even in the teeth of the actual evidence. [2 Tim. 3:1 – 8, 4:1 – 5, cf. 3:12 - 17.]

Moreover, unless their current belief system is manifestly failing, people generally accept what accords with what they already believe and reject whatever does not accord with what they already believe, so once a false ideology has taken root in a community, it is very hard indeed to uproot.

This brings out the critical strategic roles played by major community institutions. For, as we grow up, our core beliefs and values are accepted from and shaped by authorities such as parents, churches, schools, the media, our peers on the street, popular leaders and politicians — it is only later in life, if ever, that we critically assess them. As a direct result, the key battle in the war of ideas is always political: which authorities and agendas will dominate the media, the school and the academy. Victory or defeat in these three institutions determines the dominant ideas, perceptions and messages that spread through a given community — and, in an ever more global age, the world.

Over the past several decades in our region, the tide of this battle has clearly been shifting to the secularists and their post-modern fellow travellers, especially as the dominant media power of

the United States spreads through our region. Key factors include: penetration of satellite/cable TV and the Internet; the messages spread by popular music, art forms and entertainment; the spin put on news and issues in the global media and international forums such as the UN; the dominant secularist ideological underpinnings of higher education; and even project requirements of major funding agencies. If we simply drift with this tide, our region will increasingly be pulled into the orbit of the latest trends in North America and Europe, often to our demonstrable detriment.

Consequently, if we are to counter the tide, and fulfil our calling to be effective as Christian leaders working to disciple the nations in our region, we must be ever alert to the various philosophies, ideologies, agendas and underlying values and beliefs that are being communicated to our communities, whether openly or subtly. We must also understand how the various persuasive techniques work, and learn how to effectively respond. Most of all, we must be willing to respond effectively, using art-forms, schools, media-houses, books, and whatever other legitimate means are at our disposal.

3.4   Evolutionary Materialism

The intellectual powerhouse that energises secularism is Evolutionary Materialism.[19] Consequently, we must take its measure, and understand then respond to its claims, strengths and limitations, if we are to be effective as educated Christian thinkers and leaders in our region.

Now, except in intellectual circles, Evolutionism is not yet an openly dominant influence in our region, due to the lingering hold of the Bible on the popular mindset. As time goes on, however, the secularist trend is clearly gathering momentum, and so it is imperative for us to respond to it without further delay.

The core issue, of course, is that the biological Theory of [Macro-] Evolution is often held to "prove" the philosophy of Materialism, thus discrediting the Bible and the Christian Faith. This leads to four critical questions:

(1) Is biological macro-evolution a proven fact?

(2) Do the various evolutionary philosophies and theories in various fields of study necessarily follow from biological macro-evolution?

(3) Can these philosophies and theories stand up as proven facts?

(4) Does Evolution therefore disprove the existence of God?

The critical issue is the linkage between observable data, the inferred theory of macro-evolution, and the claimed implication, materialism. If the inference is good and the implication holds, then God is dead, full stop. So would be Man.

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[19] Often called "Naturalism." *Evolutionary Materialism* is used here because it is a more descriptive phrase.

First, a clarification. It is macro-evolution which is at stake, not the minor population variations commonly called micro-evolution. We are not discussing well known small scale changes, such as Darwin's Finches or Industrial Melanism, but rather the grand theory that seeks to explain the origin and diversification of life into the many forms in the fossil record and those existing today.

All such macro-theories face three major difficulties: explaining the origin of life; explaining the mechanism that allows, say, a fish to evolve into a man in several hundred million years; explaining the all-too-characteristic "sudden appearances and disappearances" of life-forms in the "almost unmanageably rich" fossil record, which is the major evidence.

For, as many competent commentators have repeatedly pointed out,[20] the leap from amino acids formed in spark-in-gas experiments to a complete and functioning life-form is vast. Colour changes in moths are one thing, "amoeba to man" quite another. A fossil record of gaps and postulated but still all-too-missing links is more of an embarrassment than a proof (and has always been so).[21] In short, it is hardly proper to conclude, after more than a century, that macro-evolution is proven fact.

Of course, to many, macro-evolution "must" be true — the alternative, creation and/or intelligent design, "is incredible." Their basic reason, of course, is that they are philosophical materialists — they <u>begin</u> by *assuming* that there is no God, rather than with an open-minded assessment of the evidence.   Plainly, this is a circular argument — one obvious alternative is that God/the Intelligent Designer used evolution as his means of creation! Another, given the problems with the evidence, is that macro-evolution simply did not happen. (This may be intellectually unfashionable, but it is definitely <u>not</u> ruled out by the available evidence.)

In short, while macro-evolution may well fit into an atheistic view of the world, it is itself open to significant challenge and simply cannot prove materialism to be true.

Philosophical materialism, however, has deeper problems. It argues that the cosmos is the product of chance interactions of matter and energy, within the constraint of the laws of nature. Therefore, all phenomena in the universe, without residue, are determined by the working of purposeless laws acting on material objects, under the direct or indirect control of chance.

But human thought, clearly a phenomenon in the universe, must now fit into this picture. Thus, what we subjectively experience as "thoughts" and "conclusions" can only be understood materialistically as unintended by-products of the natural forces which cause and control the electro-chemical events going on in neural networks in our brains. (These forces are viewed as ultimately physical, but are taken to be partly mediated through a complex pattern of genetic inheritance and psycho-social conditioning, within the framework of human culture.)

Therefore, if materialism is true, the "thoughts" we have and the "conclusions" we reach, without residue, are produced and controlled by forces that are irrelevant to purpose, truth, or validity.

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[20] See the references at the end of this module.

[21] In Darwin's day, it was confidently expected that the "gaps" would be filled in, hence the search for "missing links."
The persistence of the gaps in the fossil record — though often denied in debate — is sufficiently serious that the late Steven Jay Gould (of Harvard), Niles Eldredge et al proposed an alternative to Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory: Punctuated Equilibrium.

Of course, the conclusions of such arguments may still happen to be true, by lucky coincidence — but we have no *rational grounds* for relying on the "reasoning" that has led us to feel that we have "proved" them.   And, if our materialist friends then say: "But, we can always apply scientific tests, through observation, experiment and measurement," then we must note that to <u>demonstrate</u> that such tests provide empirical support to their theories requires the use of the very process of reasoning which they have discredited!

Thus, evolutionary materialism reduces reason itself to the status of illusion. But, immediately, that includes "Materialism."   For instance, Marxists commonly deride opponents for their "bourgeois class conditioning" — but what of the effect of their own class origins? Freudians frequently dismiss qualms about their loosening of moral restraints by alluding to the impact of strict potty training on their "up-tight" critics — but doesn't this cut both ways? And, should we not simply ask a Behaviourist whether s/he is simply another operantly conditioned rat trapped in the cosmic maze?

In the end, materialism is based on self-defeating logic, and only survives because people often fail (or, sometimes, refuse) to think through just what their beliefs really mean.

As a further consequence, materialism can have no basis, other than arbitrary or whimsical choice and balances of power in the community, for determining what is to be accepted as True or False, Good or Evil. So, Morality, Truth, Meaning, and, at length, Man, are dead.

As Francis Schaeffer and others have so ably pointed out, this inner contradiction explains modern man's dilemma and confusion. For, his soul — created by God, our real Maker — tells such a man that he is significant, but what he thinks he knows tells him that he is nothing but a random bit of rubbish cast up by an ultimately chaotic and purposeless universe. He therefore knows not which to believe, and so lives under a cloud of hopeless despair, "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

It is consequently no surprise to detect the consistent theme that all of reality is ultimately meaningless in modern and post-modern Literature, in contemporary Philosophy, and in the Arts generally. Equally unsurprisingly, when materialistic evolutionary frameworks are applied to academic/professional disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Linguistics, Economics, Management, or Media and Communication, it is the implications of materialism that invariably are the root of anti-Christian bias.

In Law, Government, and Public Policy, the same bitter seed has shot up the idea that "Right" and "Wrong" are simply arbitrary social conventions. This has often led to the adoption of hypocritical, inconsistent, futile and self-destructive public policies.

"Truth is dead," so Education has become a power struggle; the victors have the right to propagandise the next generation as they please. Media power games simply extend this cynical manipulation from the school and the campus to the street, the office, the factory, the church and the home.

Further, since family structures and rules of sexual morality are "simply accidents of history," one is free to force society to redefine family values and principles of sexual morality to suit one's preferences.

Finally, life itself is meaningless and valueless, so the weak, sick, defenceless and undesirable — for whatever reason — can simply be slaughtered, whether in the womb, in the hospital, or in the death camp.

In short, ideas sprout roots, shoot up into all aspects of life, and have consequences in the real world. Paul therefore aptly summarises the bitter fruit of dismissing God from our thoughts:

> since they did not think it worth while to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve those who practice them. [Rom. 1:28 - 32; cf. 18 - 27, which shows the significance of widespread sexual perversions in a culture.]

However, since evolutionary materialism has become the orthodoxy of the academic community and that of many policy-makers and opinion leaders, it is often simply embedded in the foundation of contemporary academic discourse, public discussion of issues, and the policy-making and implementing process.

Therefore, educated Christians must learn how to unearth these hidden assumptions, and then to expose the resulting contradictions, foolish policy recommendations and their likely bitter fruit.[22] Once that is done, we can then set about separating the wheat of sound insight from the chaff of anti-Christian bias, then work towards a sounder, more sustainable future for our region.

3.5   Post-Modernism

The logically self-defeating, morally bankrupt, environmentally destructive, economically unjust nature of secular humanist thought has led to an ongoing disintegration of modernity, thus to the rise of post-modernism. For, it has become all too evident that men, starting from themselves and observation of the world around them, cannot come to an enduring consensus about ultimate reality in general, and in particular, specific and vital issues over truth, knowledge, values/morality, law and public policy.

As a result of this lack of consensus and resulting polarised diversity of views and agendas, a radical relativism has increasingly dominated the academy, the media, public policy, the arts and

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[22] NB: Much more could be said on this topic, and the above is, due to the short space available, almost over-simplified. It should be clear, however, that the materialist rebellion against God has led to many of the characteristic problems of the modern world. I urge you to read widely in this area. It would especially be useful to consult the second edition of C. S. Lewis' *Miracles,* Ch. 3, and Ronald Nash's *Faith and Reason,* Ch. 18, which are the basic sources for the above argument about the self-defeating nature of materialism.

popular culture. "Tolerance" and "diversity" are therefore the watch-words of the emerging global era — as we slide towards collective suicide in a cesspit of sensual perversion and self-indulgence. [Cf. Eph 4:17 – 24.]

Against this backdrop, the church been shaken by the secularist idea that God is simply a fairy tale, and that morality is simply a matter of personal or cultural values and norms. So, we have not been quick to publicly expose secularism's bankruptcy and respond to the huge wave of spiritual hunger that has swept the globe in the 1990's.

Such a deep hunger in a relativistic, pluralistic age has also naturally accommodated the idea that all religions are equally roads to "God." Thus, "tolerance" is now often redefined from *respect for diversity* to the notion that one must never assert or imply that another person's faith may be in error.

But, on closer inspection, it turns out that this concept may sometimes simply be *atheism in disguise*! For, its advocates often quietly assume that religious beliefs are only true in the sense that those who believe feel that they are true. Granting this, of course it follows that all religions are equally roads to god: "god" being simply a fairy tale that props up weak hearts and minds.

For others, the idea that "all roads equally lead to God" means that they have simply reinterpreted — "wrenched" is a more accurate, though less polite, word — the world's major religious traditions out of context in light of their own ideas. Typically, they hold a vague notion of "a common thread of truth" in all the traditions, dismissing anything that runs counter to such assumed "common truths."

For instance, one popular guru has attempted to take "Be still and know that I am God" out of its context of quiet worship before our Creator, the LORD, into the utterly different Hindu concept that *Atman is Brahman* (roughly, "each of us is a little spark of god"). Far from being "tolerant," such sloppy thinking actually disrespects the fact of diversity in those traditions.

Thus, dramatic changes are also taking place in the world's spiritual climate. While many people are still skeptical over any form of spirituality, the inner emptiness caused by trying to dismiss God as a fairy tale has created a great hunger for spiritual experience. Many forms of "New Age" spirituality — repackaged paganism — are therefore emerging and are rapidly spreading across the world. Islam, too, is aggressively responding to the hunger, and is working hard to win converts and to build a strong base in the Caribbean. Even Hinduism is now taking a far more assertive stance in our communities.

In short, there is a regional spiritual crisis, one that is largely taking place at the expense of the church. It is therefore necessary for us to respond vigorously to the underlying themes and issues.

First, we need to establish a self-evident — but often denied — fact: the basic existence of truth. For instance, as Elton Trueblood argues in his *General Philosophy*, if we try to deny the claim: "Error exists," that would imply that the challenged claim is in error — proving it! Thus, we may freely infer that at least one true claim exists, so truth exists. It also follows that there is something to be in error about: the real world. [Of course, such an "existence proof" should give pause to those who try to deny that objective truth exists, but it does not give us a golden key to the content of truth in general.]

But, is truth knowable? This can best be responded to by noting that if one tries to claim that "we cannot know the truth," this is itself a claim to know an objective truth: the "un-knowability" of truth — again, a self-defeating claim.

So, it would be wiser to accept that, while our specific knowledge-claims are provisional — i.e. subject to correction in light of further evidence or reasoned argument — we can discover, recognise and understand truth and right. Thus, however imperfectly, we reflect the image of our Creator, who know all things and can reveal them to us, through: (1) Creation [thus, the value of sound scientific research]; (2) our inner, intuitive awareness of truth and right [thus, the power of conscience-guided reason]; (3) his Word given through true, authenticated spokesmen/prophets [thus the importance of the Holy Scripture]; and — most important of all — (4) his Incarnate Son, authenticated by the resurrection from the dead. [Cf. Heb. 1:1 – 14, esp. 1 - 4.]

We can then turn to questions of values and morality. In this sphere, the Caribbean is now rapidly entering the post-modern age of cynical relativism — Yale Law Professor Arthur Leff's age of "the grand 'Sez who?'" For, many people now think there is nothing more to truth and morality than "this seems true or right to me." Therefore, they mistakenly challenge any asserted truth or moral claim that does not suit their fancy: "Who are you to impose *your* standards and views on me?"

They thus fall into a glaring inconsistency: how can you at one and the same time say that truth and right are relative to individuals and cultures, then expect others to accept as binding the moral obligation that they *should not* "impose their views on others"?

Clearly, then, relativists accept that at least one moral principle, respect for the views of others, is universally binding — or else, they would be the most blatant of hypocrites.   Why, then do they so often try to deny the binding nature of other time-tested, godly moral principles, such as respect for marriage and the family, for life, for property, for truth, and for the reputation and achievements of others? [Cf. Exodus 20:3 – 17.]

Broadening this argument, the key point is that we all believe we have rights, and become quite upset or even angry when we feel that our rights are violated. So, as C. S. Lewis observed, we quarrel in the private sphere, and we cry out for "equal rights and justice" in the public arena.   So, we reveal that we believe in objective moral standards that bind duties on other people. (Unfortunately, we too often fail to bind ourselves by these duties as well, and become hypocritical. Thus, the bite in "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." [Matt. 7:12, KJV.])

So then, all of us, in practice (but not necessarily in theory) believe in the objectivity of truth and of morality. This, of course, sharply cuts across the evolutionary materialist's picture of the world, "red in tooth and claw," but it sits quite comfortably with the picture Paul painted on a fateful day in Athens.

 As Acts 17:16 - 34 records, he had gone to Athens to take a brief rest from his stressful Macedonian adventures.   However, he found the shock of Athens' extreme idolatry and associated moral bankruptcy in the very centre of Western Culture's intellectual tradition too disturbing to keep silent. So, as Socrates had so often done five hundred years earlier, he went to the marketplace and started to discuss the things of God with passersby.

Soon, a group of Philosophers invited him to a meeting of the same Council of Athens' leading citizens that had passed unjust judgement on Socrates.[23]   There, Paul addressed Athens' leaders about nationhood under God:

❑ First, he picked the shrine that exposed the critical flaw in Pagan thought: an altar dedicated TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. That is, on the most important possible point of knowledge, the Athenians — the founders of the Western intellectual, artistic and democratic traditions — were forced to admit their ignorance, in a public monument!

❑ Paul continued: "what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you." For, God created the nations from one man, and "he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this *so that* men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him." [Acts 17:25 - 27; emphasis added.] That is, *the nations were created to foster godliness,* and we are God's tenants and stewards on the lands in which we live. God therefore so controls our times that he brings us to the point where we must decide whether to seek or serve Him.

❑ The Apostle then turned to the folly of devoting ourselves to substitutes for God, concluding: "now [God] commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day in which he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." That man, of course, is Jesus.

So the Athenians got more than they bargained for. Starting from a careful analysis of their culture, religion and thinking, the leaders of Athens were forced to face the challenge of nationhood under Christ. Sadly, at their moment of decision, most of the leaders failed to follow the truth, but we know now who had the better case that fateful day — the future belonged to the Apostle, not to the Philosophers and Politicians.

3.6   Islam in the Caribbean

Islam is now being strongly promoted in the Caribbean as a major alternative to the Christian Faith, to postmodernism and to neo-paganism, as people grope for meaning in the aftermath of the disintegration of modernity.   It is also not well understood in the region, and so it is properly the capstone Apologetics in action case in this primer.

The Islamic Challenge

Islam is rapidly growing as a spiritual challenge in the Caribbean. For example, Suriname and Guyana — the latter with Muslims as some 10 – 12% of the population — are now both full members of the Islamic Conference Organisation, OIC, and are therefore officially Islamic countries. In the mid 1990's in Barbados, over half of recorded conversions were to Islam.

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[23] In 399 BC; cf. for instance Ross' Commentary on the *Apology* of Socrates at http://www.friesian.com/#contents . At least, with Paul, the issue seems to have been intellectual frivolity, rather than the proverbial cup of hemlock given to Socrates.

Jamaica, too has a rising Islamic influence, especially through the claims[24] that the Spanish settlement from 1494 on was predominantly Moorish, and that "Moor": (1) implies Islamic – true, and (2) includes Black African (misleading[25]).

It is then inferred that the majority of Jamaicans are descended from Islamic Moors, who were brought here as slaves by the Spanish or the British, so that: "[c]ontemporaneous to the autonomous Muslim Maroon *umma*h, hundreds of thousands of *Mu'minun* (the Believers of the Islamic faith) of African descent worked as slaves on the plantations in Jamaica."[26] Specifically, the Maroons are viewed as resisting the British invaders of 1655 by *jihad,* as Saladin resisted and finally defeated Richard the Lion Heart and the other Crusaders in the Middle East. Slave revolts, similarly, are reinterpreted by Dr. Afroz as jihads, especially the 1831/2 "Baptist War" rebellion:

> *Jihad* became the religious and political ideology of these crypto-Muslims, who became members of the various denominational nonconformist churches since being sprinkled with the water by the rectors of the parishes.[27] Despite the experience of the most cruel servitude and the likelihood of a swift and ruthless suppression of the rebellion, the spiritually inspired *Mu'minun* collectively
> responded to the call for an island-wide *jihad* in 1832. Commonly known as the Baptist Rebellion, the *Jihad* of 1832 wrought havoc of irreparable dimension to the plantation system and hastened the Emancipation Act of 1833. [Afroz, p. 227.]

Thus, it is concluded by Islamic advocates that the Caribbean's ancestral and cultural roots are largely Islamic. Islam, then, seeks cultural legitimacy in the Caribbean as being linked to our predominantly African identity, which is specifically tied to an emphasis on jihad as military struggle. On this basis, Caribbean peoples are in effect invited to turn away from both secularism and the Christian religion of our oppressors, and "return" to Islam.

Responding to the Islamic Challenge

The shaky historical and cultural foundation for the above claims should be quite evident: the overwhelming historical and anthropological evidence is that our "crypto-Muslim" African ancestors were in fact predominantly and very actively animistic, and that Islam first gained a significant institutionalised presence in the region with the settlement of Indian indentured

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[24] Drawn from several recent academic papers, newspaper articles and exhibitions by Dr. Sultana Afroz of UWI, and others. Cf. Prof. Maureen Warner Lewis' devastating response: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20021020/focus/focus3.html

[25] The OED notes: (1) *"**Moor:** a member of a Muslim people of mixed Berber and Arab descent, inhabiting N W Africa"*; (2)*"**Berber:** a member of the indigenous mainly Muslim Caucasian peoples of N. Africa"; and (3) "**Arab:** a member of a Semitic people inhabiting originally Saudi Arabia and the neighbouring countries, now the Middle East generally."* For, arising from the Islamic conquest of The Middle East and North Africa in the seventh century, and from a process of conversion to Islam and intermarriage, the Moors emerged as a new people. They played a major role in the Islamic invasion of Europe from 711 - 714 AD on, and ruled much of the Iberian Peninsula (making significant cultural contributions to Iberia and to Europe as a whole) until the *Reconquista* was completed when the Moorish Kingdom of Granada was defeated by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1491. There was an infusion of black, sub-Saharan Africans into the Moorish mix, largely due to the Islamic slave trade. Trade and travel into sub-Saharan Africa also led to the penetration of Islam East, Central and West Africa. However, the predominant religions and cultures of sub-Saharan Africa continued to be animistic until quite recent times, with the rise of the Christian Missionary movement — in which Jamaicans (especially the Baptists) and other Caribbeans played no small part from 1839 on.

[26] Afroz, S.: "The *Jihad* of 1831–1832: The Misunderstood Baptist Rebellion in Jamaica," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2001,* p. 227. In short, the Afroz claim is that Afro-Jamaican slaves were *predominantly* Islamic.

[27] NB: Highly unlikely, as such Anglican rectors as a rule frowned on non-conformists, especially Baptists — "immersionists."

labourers in the mid-nineteenth century. As for the concept that the Maroons were Moorish/Islamic to the point of constituting an Islamic community under Islamic law (i.e. an *ummah*), one should start by considering the fact that they have been famous, from Spanish times, for Jerk Pork — a major Islamic no-no[28]!

But, while it would be relatively easy to challenge the above in a Seminar Room, it is another matter to take it on in the streets, or even on middle class verandahs, given the unhealed wounds of our unfinished history of oppression and injustice at the hands of "Christian" Europeans and North Americans.

That is, just as has been the case with Rastafarianism, mere argument is not enough. For, until and unless the Church takes the lead, and demonstrates successful reformation and renewal of the cultures of our region towards sustainable prosperity and development, Islam will have a powerful appeal to many Caribbean people.[29]

Understanding Islam

As a part of our overall response to the growing regional Islamic challenge, it is necessary to understand and respond to Islam in general[30]:

> In the early seventh century, the Angel Gabriel reportedly appeared to Muhammad, a merchant from Mecca in SW Arabia, and initiated a series of revelations that have been handed down in the *Quran* ["Recitation"] and the *Hadiths* [traditions and sayings of the Prophet]. These revelations and traditions are the foundation for Islamic teachings/belief and faith [*iman*], law [*sharia*] and community [*umma*], all of which are to be integrated, instituted and enforced in a properly established Muslim state.[31]

> Muhammad first hesitated — he wondered if he was going mad under demonic influence, and had to be encouraged by his wife, Khadijah — but then began to preach in Mecca, where he made but few converts. While his basic sincerity was clear, he found that his claims were rejected by the Christians and the Jews,[32] and by the majority of the pagan Meccans; some of whom threatened his safety and persecuted his followers. So, after being invited to be its ruler, he fled to Yathrib in 622, which was renamed Medina, the City of the Prophet.

> From the base in Medina, Islam then spread by alliance, conversion and military victories. Within a decade, Arabia was under Islamic rule. Jews and Christians were reduced to subject people status as *dhimmis* [protected persons], and were ultimately expelled from Arabia under Umar. It also seems that pagans were often viewed as having no religion, and were at least sometimes offered the options of conversion to Islam, or being put to the sword. All of this

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[28] Similarly, Nanny is far more readily understood as an adept of African Religions than as a miracle-working Sufi Saint.

[29] Over the past five centuries, once the Scriptures were put in the hands of the ordinary man, Christianity has frequently played a leading prophetic role in cultural and social reformation, not least in the abolition of slavery. Even the modern democratic nation-state is largely a heritage of the Protestant Reformation. [Cf. The Dutch Declaration of Independence, 1581, Duplesis-Mornay's 1579 *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, and Rutherford's *Lex, Rex* as well as the second paragraph of the American Declaration of Independence, 1776.]

[30] Summarised fom various sources, especially Chapman's *Cross and Crescent*, Cooper's *Ishmael My Brother,* Sookhdeo's *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam*, the Caner's *Unveiling Islam* and the Web site http://www.answering-islam.org.uk/ .

[31] That is, Islam traditionally seeks territorial control as a legally established religion, through state power.

[32] As a false prophet teaching doctrines contrary to the Jewish and Christian traditions and Scriptures.

was in accord with the temper of the times, and it seems that at least some Christians in Syria saw the prospect of Islamic rule as an improvement over "Christian" Byzantine rule!

After Muhammad's death in 632, at the [approximate] age of sixty-three, the process of conquest continued under Abu Bakr and the other early *Caliphs.* Islamic armies swept over the Persian and Byzantine empires, spreading across the Middle East and North Africa, and on into Europe and India by 711. In the West they were stopped by Charles Martel at Tours, about a hundred miles from Paris, in 732. Reportedly, Islamic sea raiders attacked the Irish coasts as well.[33]

Beyond those regions, Islam has been predominantly spread by traders and the teachings of Islamic holy men, especially the mystical *Sufis.* Thus for instance, Indonesia became the world's most populous Muslim country, and sub-Saharan Africa saw a gradual Islamic penetration from the North from about the tenth century on.[34] (In recent decades, there has also been a large-scale, well organised *Dawa,* a missionary campaign to proclaim and establish Islam in all nations.)

Islamic believers famously practice the Five Pillars of Islam: (1) Confession that Allah alone is God and Muhammad his Prophet/Apostle — Authoritative Spokesman; (2) Prayer to Allah while prostrated towards Mecca, five times per day; (3) Fasting (especially during Ramadan); (4) Almsgiving; (5) where possible, Pilgrimage to the *Kaaba* in Mecca.[35] Some add a sixth pillar, *Jihad,* or struggle: classically, in the sense of religiously motivated military conflict to extend the sphere of Islam, but the term is also used in the "higher" sense of spiritual/moral struggle.

In the process of its initial territorial expansion, Islam viewed the world as divided into two zones: *Dar al Islam* [the house of submission to Allah[36]]; and *Dar al Harb* [the house of the sword/war]. In the former domain, those who hold to other religions — most notably Judaism and Christianity — may continue to practice their belief, but are often subjected to the conditions of the Pact of Umar, and are *Dhimmis* ["protected persons"] with sharply restricted Civil Rights relative to Muslim men.[37] From the Seventh Century on, this has materially

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[33] The Crusades, strictly speaking, were therefore counter-offensives; however despicably carried out in contravention of the letter and spirit of the Gospel. They were apparently initially provoked by the harassment of Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land — e.g., in 1064-5, seven thousand German pilgrims were ambushed, with much slaughter. [Cf. the Caners' *Unveiling Islam* (Kregel, 2002) pp 73 -5, and the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* article at http://www.fordham.edu/halshall/source/1064pilgrim.html.]

[34] This is why in many African nations in the band from say the Ivory Coast and Nigeria to Sudan, Uganda and Kenya, there is a consistent pattern of an Islamic North, and a Christian and/or Animist South. (The strong Christian presence in sub-Saharan Africa is in the main due to the modern Christian Missionary movements of the past three Centuries. That in Northern Africa is due to the strong base of early Christianity in the African provinces of the Roman Empire.)

[35] Originally, the Kaaba was a Pagan shrine, reportedly dedicated to 360 gods, including Allah. The three goddesses, Al Lat, Al Uzza and Manat — who in the "Satanic Verses" Muhammad allowed prayers to be directed to — were apparently traditionally identified as Allah's three daughters, in the native pagan religion. (Cf. Sura 53:19 – 23, subsequently abrogated and modified to read very differently in the current version.)

[36] The root meaning of the word "Islam" is submission; such submission to Allah then results in "peace." A "Muslim" is one who has submitted, and thus has found peace. This contrasts with the Christian/Hebraic message that there is a radical alienation from God due to sin and guilt, which must be expiated. [Cf. Rom. 5:1 -11, 7:14 – 8:19.]

[37] For instance, their testimony in Court is regarded as not credible relative to that of a Muslim. This sharply restricts the ability of dhimmis to engage in commerce with confidence, to own property or to hold responsible positions. Thus, since this condition is deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, even where it is not officially the law of the land, it leads to a distinct second class citizen status for such dhimmis. Cf. http://www.dhimmitude.org/archive/by_lecture_10oct2002.htm for Bat Ye'or's detailed review.

contributed to the conversion of subject peoples to Islam, as people sought to gain the status of full members of the community. [38]

Treaties with non-Islamic states, on this classic Islamic view, are inherently temporary truces,[39] and the expansion of Islam by military means is always an open option. (According to some observers, the classic example of this was set by Muhammad himself, who they say broke a peace treaty between Medina and the *Quraysh* of Mecca,[40] and so conquered his native city, putting to the sword key opponents and critics, including a poetess who had composed satirical poems challenging his integrity.) However, from the Middle Ages on, there have been Muslim scholars, jurists and statesmen who have argued for a more permanent character to such treaties.[41]

Islam views the Old Testament prophets and Jesus as Prophets of Allah, and regards the Bible as inspired, to the extent that it has not been corrupted.[42] In particular, the concept of the Trinity is viewed as an attempt to elevate Mary — yes, *Mary* — and Jesus to divine status alongside Allah, that is *Shirk,*[43] and Christianity is therefore often viewed as idolatrous. Muhammad, as Allah's final Prophet, has the last say on matters of revelation and fact.

As Surah 4:156 – 158 records, the Quran specifically denies the crucifixion of Christ: "they killed him not, nor crucified him . . . . Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself."[44] Thus, the Quran's message is explicitly incompatible with the core gospel message: "on which [we Christians] have taken [our] stand. By this gospel [we] are saved if [we] hold firmly to the word . . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . . . And if Christ has not been raised [from the dead], our preaching is useless and so is [our] faith . . . [we] are still in [our] sins." [1 Cor. 15:2 – 5, 14, 17.]

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[38] The consensus of the four main schools of Islamic law, *Hanifi, Maliki, Shafi* and *Hanbali,* is that adult males who leave Islam are subject to the death penalty. Even where this is not enforced through the state, such converts are often isolated from their families, sometimes under threat to their lives, and need the understanding and ongoing support of the Christian community.

[39] Islam regards deception in war as religiously justifiable. Thus, Muhammad's treaty with Mecca reportedly set the precedent for *Takiya,* described as "peace when you are weak for the purposes of defeating your enemy when you are stronger." [Cf. Farah, *The lesson of al-Hudaybiyah,* http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=27712.]

[40] Others assert that the Meccans provoked Muhammad's assault by attacking his allies. (It should be noted that such disputes over who first started hostilities are common. But the most salient points for our attention are that: (1) what may constitute a "provocation" in Islamic eyes is extremely flexible, and (2) "temporary truces" is a clear Islamic model for dealing with powerful opponents in the short term while preparing for renewed hostilities at a more favourable time. For, in Islamist eyes, true peace is only possible when the world is reduced to submission to Allah — the root meaning of "Islam.")

[41] The ambivalence in the commitment of Islamic nations to the UN Charter on Human Rights is a most important case in point.

[42] Thus, attempts to use NT or OT texts to demonstrate the Deity of Christ will often be dismissed as instances of corruption of the text. The secularist-influenced biblical criticism of the past several centuries may also be pressed into service to support such claims, compounding the argument. Although the historical and textual critical evidence, in fact, do not support such a corruption thesis, the issue rapidly becomes one of the Authority/Credibility of Muhammad as God's final Prophet, and so it is very hard for the evidence to be heard. Thus, relationship and trust must come before argument and debate: the truth, in love.

[43] See *Surah* 4:48 and 171, and 5:116. *Shirk* is viewed as the most deadly of all sins, 4:48 describes it as unpardonable: "Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else." However, the Islamic view on the Trinity reflects Muhammad's encounters with heretical sects in Arabia rather than the biblically rooted orthodox Christian understanding of the Tri-unity of the Godhead. [Especially see Heb. 1:1 – 14, John 1:1 – 14, Phil. 2:5 – 11, 1 Cor. 12:2 – 6, Acts 5:3 - 4.] The historic Christian teaching asserts that God is One, a complex unity: a unity of Eternal being, integrated with a diversity of personal manifestation: Father, Son and Spirit. (It bears noting that Son, here, is not used in the physical sense; the incarnation is not at all parallel to the pagan tales of gods and their proclivities for pretty girls.) Thus, the tension between unity and diversity in the cosmos finds its resolution in the inherent nature of the Godhead. This is mysterious, but it is not contradictory, for even water, ice and steam share a common nature while being vastly diverse as to manifestation. More profoundly, "God is Love" [1 John 4:8] — an interpersonal, relational concept — is viewed by Christians as integral to the essential nature of God.

[44] Cited, Patrick Sookhdeo, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam* [Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2002], p. 39.

As Dr Patrick Sookhdeo — intimately familiar with Islam in the Caribbean, being a native of Guyana — also reports, "Muslims believe that Jesus will come back to earth as a Muslim, will marry and have children, then die and be buried near Muhammad. Some traditions assert that at this second coming He will destroy every cross, kill all Jews, convert the Christians to Islam, and reign as king of all Muslims." [Sookhdeo, p. 22.]

Farrakhan's Nation of Islam [NOI] is somewhat divergent from mainstream Islam, as it is rooted in the rejection of racism in the United States, and views Islam as the answer for the Black man. It is somewhat syncretistic between Muslim, Jehovah's Witness and more orthodox Christian beliefs, has Afrocentric elements and views the White race as the product of breeding experiments over six hundred years by an evil scientist. In some cases, NOI spokesmen reportedly may go so far as to view white people as incarnate devils.

Responding to Islamic Theological Claims

Clearly, the critical theological divergence between Islam and the gospel is that Islam does not accept the need for Christ as the Redeemer/Saviour and reconciler between the Holy God and sinful, rebellious and morally defiled man. Consequently, Islam redefines Jesus as a merely human Prophet of Allah, and rejects the biblical testimony to Christ's Eternal Sonship, Incarnation, atoning death on the cross, and his resurrection — by raising the charge that the texts have been corrupted.

However, there is no real evidential basis for such corruption of the text, since we can directly trace its history, and that of the teachings of the Church Fathers, to the edge of the First Century. Indeed, this history is also externally supported: for example Pliny the Younger, Roman Governor of Bithynia *circa* 110 AD, in discussing trials of Christians, confirms the doctrinal picture we read in the New Testament. Josephus, a Jewish historian, and Seutonius, a Roman historian, allow us to carry this recognizable picture back to the 30's to 70's. Pagan graffiti in Roman Arenas mocks early Christians for worshipping a crucified Christ (who is sometimes mockingly caricatured with an Ass' head). Even the Talmud, by accusing him of blasphemy and demonic powers, provides inadvertent support to the historicity of Jesus' teachings, claims and miracles.

In short, biblical, orthodox Christian teachings and beliefs are, beyond reasonable doubt, rooted in the historic New Testament Faith. Paul summarises the core of that Faith as he sets out the theme of his Epistle to the Romans, which dates to the 50's in the First Century — within thirty years of Jesus' ministry:

> [T]he gospel of God — the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. [Rom1:2 – 4.]

Thus we may see the critical contrast between authentic Christian faith and Islam's underlying principles: a gospel of salvation that leads to righteousness through personal spiritual transformation by the power of the indwelling Spirit[45] vs. a framework of religious laws, traditions and precedents that seeks to bring people and communities to submission and, through conformity to its rules, to reform them towards righteousness.

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[45] Cf. Gal. 5:1 – 6:10.

Unfortunately, such a law-centred framework for achieving righteousness simply will not, and cannot, work.[46] The agonized, lived-out words of the Apostle Paul — who started his life as "a Hebrew of Hebrews . . . as for legalistic righteousness, faultless"[47] — explain why:

> We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do . . . . When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. Who will rescue me from this body of death?[48]

In short, knowing and delighting in the righteous requirements of God is good, but it is utterly incapable of breaking through our underlying problem: enslavement to sin. Is there any hope for us?

Thank God, yes! Paul, speaking from experience, explains why the gospel lives up to its name — Good News:

> Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . . because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set [us] free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit . . . . And if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit . . . . if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.[49]

Thus, while it is appropriate to point out to our Muslim friends that there are significant misunderstandings in the Islamic picture of Christianity, that there is good historical evidence for the claims that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, died on a cross and rose from the dead, and that there is solid reason to reject the claims that the New Testament is fraudulent or corrupted, these are not the heart of the matter.

Instead, let us focus on the core issue: sin, enslavement to sin even in the teeth of delighting in laws that identify and command what is good and right, and our consequent profound need for radical Salvation and transformation from within by the Spirit of God. To access that hope and transforming power, we must put our trust in the Incarnate Christ and Eternal Son of God, who came in love, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of dying on a cross for our sins as our sinless substitute, and then rose in power on the third day as Son of God and Lord, in order that he might fill all things with his grace and glory.

Consequently, we conclude, on a note of both warning and hope[50]:

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[46] Cf. Rom. 9:30 - 10:21, Gal. 3:1 – 14 & 5:13 – 6:10, Eph. 4:17 – 5:21 and Col 2:8 – 3:17, esp. 2:20 – 23.
[47] Philippians 3:5 – 6.
[48] Rom 7:14 – 15; 21- 24.
[49] Rom 8:1 – 14.
[50] Gal. 3:10 – 14; Cf. Rom. 9:30 – 10:21.

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the law." Clearly no-one is justified before God by the law because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the *ethne* [Nations] through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: The above survey is desperately compressed — libraries have been filled with books on just a few of the themes touched on. However, more or less, we have covered enough ground to give us an idea of issues and approaches; we have also seen the vital importance of the life of the mind to credible Christian witness, life and leadership in our region. To fulfil this challenge, further reading, discussion, and much thought are clearly necessary. To help in this ongoing exploration, I therefore append a list of useful books and some questions for discussion. For, it is only by investigation, thinking, discussion and, yes, argument, that we will be able to adequately handle the issues we must face as we go out with the gospel into our region. Then, we will be able to properly understand our past, act wisely in the present and thus help to positively shape the Caribbean's future under God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is it true that we Christians are often unsure of what and why we believe?

2. Luke commended the Bereans for their open-mindedness. Should we, as Christians, be open to change what we believe?

3. Nearly everything we believe is hotly contested. How should we decide to accept or reject the claims and counter-claims we will meet?

4. Is the idea that we all live by one faith or another true? Does this mean that all such commitments are equally acceptable? Why? Or why not?

5. Read 1 Cor. 15:1-8, 12-19, 32. Paul claims that the resurrection of Jesus is decisive in validating Christianity. In light of Luke 1:1 – 4, Acts 1:1 – 11 and 26:1 – 32, can the reports stand up to scrutiny?

6. Read 2 Peter 1:12 – 2:3 & 3:3 – 18. What are the key marks of the Bible's authenticity? In light of the last days scoffing at the miraculous power of God predicted by Peter in 3:3 – 7, how will/do false teachers seek to undermine the credibility of the Word of God? How will/do their teachings affect their own behaviour and that of their followers? Based on 3:8 – 17, how can we detect and escape their snares?

7. It is also often claimed that one can "prove anything" using the Bible. In light of the above and 2 Tim. 2:14 – 26 & 3:14 – 17, how would you respond to such a claim?

8. List ten major alternatives to the historic, New Testament Christian faith in the Caribbean. What are their basic claims? What are their strategies for penetrating our region? Is there a common pattern? How should we respond?

USEFUL BOOKS AND WEB LINKS

1. *World on the Run,* Michael Green, IVP, 1983. [online: http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/green/runworld/runwcont.htm] A very readable overview of issues from a vigorous Christian perspective. (The best simple introduction I have seen.) For those needing a more in-depth overview, Ronald Nash's *Faith and Reason* (Zondervan, 1988) is an excellent, undergraduate level introductory text. His *Worldviews in Conflict* (Zondervan, 1992) gives good supplementary information on worldviews.

2. *More Than a Carpenter,* Josh McDowell, Tyndale, 1979. A simple, thought-provoking look at the life of Jesus. His *Evidence that Demands a Verdict,* Vols. I and II, is a compilation of research notes that gives more details.

3. *Knowing Scripture,* R. C. Sproul, IVP. A good introduction to Bible study, giving details on the inductive approach outlined in this Primer. Cf. the assessment of the reliability of the Bible at http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html , and a similarly non-technical assessment of the Jesus Seminar's claims at http://jesus.com.au/library/jesus/seminar/index.html. Bishop Spong's proposed "reformation" of Christianity, along atheistic lines, is posted on the web at http://www.dioceseofnewark.org/jsspong/reform.html, and a response is at http://www.starcourse.org/spong/ .

4. *How Should We Then Live?,* Francis Schaeffer, IVP and Crossway. An overview of the intellectual currents of our civilization. His *A Christian Manifesto* is a call to political action in the light of this analysis, with historical and theological roots in works such as Duplesis-Mornay's *Vindiciae,* Rutherford's *Lex, Rex,* and the Dutch and American Declarations of Independence (1581, 1776).

5. *The End of Man,* John W. Whitehead, Crossway, 1986. Extends and updates Schaeffer's analysis, providing an extensive bibliography. Chs. 6 - 9 provide an important perspective on technology, including AI.

6. *Christian Apologetics in a World Community,* William Dyrness, IVP. Dealing with major intellectual challenges from various perspectives in today's world. A bridge to the Postmodern era.

7. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions.* Kreeft , Peter, & Tacelli, Ronald. (Crowborough, E. Sussex: Monarch Publications, 1995.) A "summa" on conceptual, logical, factual and values issues relating to Christian faith. Very helpful as a quick first reference on questions, or as a good short resume of the field of intellectual challenges to the faith and typical informed responses.

8. *General Philosophy,* D. Elton Trueblood, Baker, 1981. An excellent overview of and introduction to Philosophy from a Christian perspective.

9. *Contours of a World View.* Holmes, Arthur F. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.) A survey of general world view concepts, issues, options and implications for life; including those tied to ethics. A basic primer for thinking through the underlying (hidden?) assumptions and agendas associated with ideas, ideals, academic disciplines and schools of thought, the arts, socio-cultural movements, policies and politics.

10. *Epistemology, the Justification of Belief.* David L. Wolfe, IVP, 1982. A look at the basic philosophical issues related to knowledge, reasoning and world views.

11. *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation.* Moreland, J[ames] P. (Grand Rapids, MI: 1992.) Perhaps a tad more than introductory, but this is such a path-breaking analysis of Science, its methods, strengths and limitations that is a necessary foundation for any serious reflection on matters linked to the Sciences. Also, a necessary backdrop for informed critical reflection on Naturalism. Every Science major, every Science or Technology Educator, and everyone concerned with scientifically linked policies should read it. Dembski's *The Pragmatic Nature of Mathematical Inquiry* [http://www.designinference.com/documents/2002.07.Math_Inquiry.pdf] addresses the parallel limitations in Mathematical thinking, in light of Godel's famous incompleteness theorems. His *Is Intelligent Design a Form of Natural Theology* [http://www.designinference.com/documents/2001.03.ID_as_nat_theol.htm] addresses the question of the project of Natural Theology and its distinction from ID: "What if the methods for identifying intelligence tell us that Michael Behe's irreducibly complex biochemical machines are in fact designed? What if careful analysis of such systems shows that natural causes (like the Darwinian mechanism of natural selection and random variation) are in principle incapable of generating such systems? In that case to charge intelligent design with trading in arguments from ignorance or invoking a god-of-the-gaps is no longer tenable. In that case gaps in naturalistic explanations for such systems are not gaps of ignorance about underlying natural causes but rather gaps in the very structure of physical reality."

12. *Darwin on Trial,* Philip E. Johnson, IVP, 1991. A Lawyer's expose of the manipulative rhetorical devices used by evolutionary materialists. Eye-opening reading! His *Reason in the Balance* (IVP, 1995) exposes case after case of Machiavellian political, academic and legal manoeuvrings (often including the unjustified breaking of careers) in the interests of the continuing secularist control of the commanding heights in the battle for the ideas and ideals that will guide the future path of western culture. More general intellectual issues linked to philosophical Naturalism may be considered at http://www.leaderu.com/menus/apologetics.html. Cf. the Discovery Institute's web site at http://www.discovery.org/crsc/index.php3.

13. *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism.* Milton, Richard. (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1997.) A critique of the scientific foundations of contemporary Darwinism, by "an inquisitive reporter," on the premise that since knowledge is "justified, true belief," the justification of those beliefs should be open to public inspection. However, Milton reports that biologists and medical men who have made discoveries bearing on evolutionary biology "have sought to publicize these discoveries in journals such as *Nature* but have been universally rejected because their discoveries are anti-Darwinian in implication and hence counter to the ruling ideology in the life sciences. They have appealed to me — a nonscientist — to help them gain publicity." [Pp. ix, x.] A devastating claim, indeed, and an independent, corroborating witness to Philip Johnson's similar claims in his books.

14. *The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom,* Robert A. Morey, Bethany, 1986. A primer on how materialists put their case, its flaws and damaging implications for freedom. It also illustrates how to respond effectively.

15. *The Challenge of Marxism,* Klaus Bockmuehl, IVP. An introductory look at Marxism, a key case illustrating the implications of evolutionary materialism. For economic issues, see Mark Blaug's *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, Cambridge, 1978, (3rd edn.), especially the chapter on Marxian economics and the introduction.

16. *Capitalism and Progress.* Goudzwaard, Bob. (Carlyle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1997.) A groundbreaking study of the rise of modern economies as the medieval worldview broke down, and an elaboration of its challenges and prospects. The discussion of the contrast between *oikonomia* and *chrematistike* [roughly: stewardship in the interests of all stakeholders of an enterprise *vs.* greed and exploitation], pp. 211 – 216, is a telling critique of modern market economies, in the interests of truly sustainable economics. More relevant today than when it was published in 1978, in Dutch.

17. *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam,* Patrick Sookhdeo, Christian Focus/Isaac, 2002. A short and well-documented, evangelistically oriented summary of Islam for Christians by a Theologian familiar with Islam in his native Guyana. Colin Chapman's *Cross and Crescent* (IVP, 1995) provides more details. (The web site, http://www.answering-islam.org.uk/ is an online dialogue of Christians and Muslims. The Christian Resources section is very useful, and includes good training materials.)

EFFECTIVE PLANNING

> Be very careful, then, how you live -- not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [Eph 5:15 - 16.]

Christians are expected to live wisely, making the most of every opportunity and living to fulfil the will of God. If we are to do so, we must know how to organise ourselves, our skills, time, money and other resources, directing our efforts towards well-chosen goals, under God's guidance. Thus, we must learn how to plan, organise, monitor and control our individual and corporate efforts so that we can make the most of every opportunity to serve Christ. The ability to make and implement effective plans is therefore part of our stewardship as disciples of Christ.

1.   Planning, Wisdom and Guidance

Wisdom -- insightful practical judgement rooted in Divine guidance, careful thought and broad experience -- is the first step to effective planning. We must, however, beware of false wisdom:

> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.
>
> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.
> [James 3: 13 - 18.]

The contrast could hardly be sharper: envy and selfish ambition, leading to disorder and every evil practice on the one hand; purity, godliness, and humility, leading to fairness, sincerity, and a harvest of "good fruit" under the guidance of God on the other. Thus, if our plans are to be based on true wisdom, we must face the question of guidance: how can we discover what God wants us to do in specific situations, and how can we know that we are not being misled?

The answer is direct: our problem is with listening and obeying rather than with hearing and knowing. As Jesus put it: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." [John 10:27.] James, emphasising God's willingness to guide, adds:

> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. [James 1:5 - 8.]

However, as 2 Tim 3:16 - 17 points out and implies, when God speaks, what he says teaches us the truth, rebukes our sinful errors and calls for their correction, leading to training and growth in righteousness. Since rebuke, correction and training cut right across our natural tendencies, we have to make a definite effort to listen, submit and obey:

> Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,
> for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
> Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil which is so prevalent, and humbly
> accept the word planted in you, which can save you.
>
> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.
> [James 1:19 - 22.]

As we try to make plans, then, we must first focus on wisdom and God's guidance, which forces us to deal with envy, selfish ambition, disobedience and unbelief. But, how does God speak to and guide us?

There are many possibilities. A Bible passage may throw sudden light on a situation. Conscience prods, subtly pointing the right -- as opposed to the convenient -- way. A friend's counsel stirs our spirits with the force of the wisdom of God [Prov 15:22]. Someone may have a dream or vision which she feels is from God, or may share a message -- a "prophecy" -- she believes God has shown her. [Acts 2:17 - 18, 18:9 - 11, 21:8 - 11.] Perhaps, even the things that happen day by day may "speak": have you ever had a fault suddenly unmasked by a series of "incidents"?

There is, however, a definite order to how God speaks to us. As Isaiah notes:

> When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter,
> should not a people enquire of their God? Why consult the dead on the behalf
> of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to
> this word, they have no light of dawn. [Isaiah 8:19, 20.]

The basic standard for evaluating guidance is whether it conforms to the written word of God. Thus, the fundamental practical condition for discerning the best path in specific situations is to have a broad and deep familiarity with the contents of the Bible, and to have a strong base of experience in applying its teachings and examples to our lives. [Cf. Deuteronomy 17:18 - 20, and Joshua 1:1 - 9.]

Further, since God will not contradict himself, what he shows us through our circumstances, the advice of others, dreams and so on will conform to the message and attitude of the Bible. Paul neatly sums up the correct attitude: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to what is good. Avoid every kind of evil." [1 Thess 5:16 - 22.] We must have the guts to stand up for the truth of Scripture and to test all proposals or plans by its light.

2.   Planning Patterns

Specific plans are made in specific situations, to solve specific problems as specific groups made up from specific individuals work together towards specific goals. Therefore, we must next consider the situation, the task, the individuals, the group they form, and the interactions among these four aspects during the planning process, which has five major steps:

1.   Ascertain as closely as possible the true facts of the situation, and clarify the nature of the problem to be solved by the plan. (When a problem is clearly and accurately defined, it is more than half-way to being solved.) This analysis should yield a coherent picture of the CONTEXT, and of our STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES in the face of the OPPOR TUNITIES and THREATS posed by the environment, i.e. SWOT. For, as Aristotle notes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, strategy is the science of opportunity.

2.   State, as concretely and simply as possible, the desired outcome of implementing the plan. This defines the OBJECTIVES, the target for our efforts. Objectives should be so worded that they can be directly observed. (At least, we must identify indicators of achievement that can be observed or, better yet, measured.)

3.   Examine the alternative STRATEGIES (ways the objectives can be achieved), under the constraint of LOGISTICS (available resources and people, organisation, communication, training, time and money etc), then select the best alternative. Bear in mind that it is logistics which breaks plans, and the consequent old soldiers' saying: "amateurs talk about strategy and tactics; professionals discuss logistics."

4.   Summarise the plan, making sure to state "who does what, where, when, why, how -- and for how long and how much." A useful framework for developing and stating it is:

> **O**   **-- OBJECTIVES --**   what is to be achieved by the plan
>
> **S**   **-- STRATEGY --**   how the objectives will be achieved
>
> **L**   **-- LOGISTICS --**   what inputs/resources it will take to do it

5.   The next stage is to IMPLEMENT the plan by delegating the authority and responsibility to execute it, all the while MONITORING and EVALUATING its execution and results: "deliverables" at "milestones." If some of these results are unacceptable, or unforseen problems crop up, corrective or CONTROL action will be necessary in light of CONTINGENCIES.   And, if the plan breaks down, it may be necessary to revisit the analysis phase and redefine the framework towards new plans for the unforeseen situation.

In diagram form:
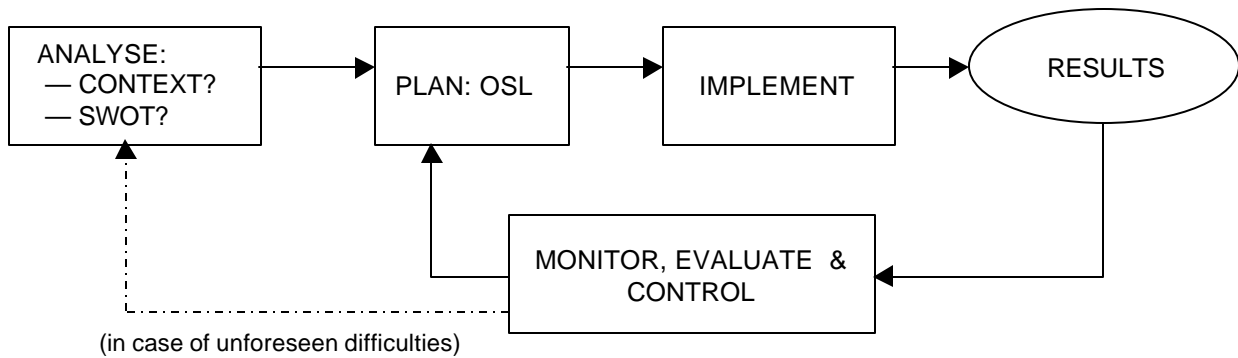
Thus, while there is a main flow from analysis to planning to implementing, the secret to successful planning lies in the monitoring and control of what happens on the ground as a plan is implemented.

At the end, it is wise to review and evaluate the process as a whole, with an eye to possibilities for improvement.

3.   Useful Professional Techniques

The basic patterns above underlie all planning, but three specific professional techniques -- network analysis of projects, the systems development life cycle recommended by the Data Processing Management Association, and simple breakeven analysis -- will be helpful in specific situations.

3.1   Network Analysis

Most of the planning we do is for projects, which have a definite beginning and a definite end, and a process of implementation which breaks down into specific activities which must be performed in clear logical sequences. Thus, activity network planning techniques, such as PERT, are useful to us.

The key to these techniques is the activity network diagram, which shows the activities and their logical order in an easily understood form. (Professionals go on to use the diagram to guide the allocation of people, skills, time, scarce resources and money, but for our purposes the diagram alone is usually all we need. If formal planning of resource allocation is needed in a specific case, I suggest that a good textbook be consulted and that one of the commercial PERT software packages be used.)

EXAMPLE PROJECT: To make a cup of tea.

We start at the end, "cup of tea made," and work back to the beginning by asking "What must be done before this stage (technically, 'event') is reached"? This specifies the activities, events, and their logical order, which we represent in a network diagram:

END: Cup of tea made
1.   Fetch cup, saucer, tea, colander
2.   Boil water
3.   Fetch milk, spoon, sugar
4.   Put tea in colander
5.   Pour boiling water through tea into colander
6.   Remove colander and spent tea
7.   Add sugar and milk to taste and stir
8.   Clean up

In the network diagram, Activities are represented by numbered arrows and the resulting Events by circles. The key rule is that an Event cannot occur until all activities which flow out of it can start, that is, all Activities pointing into it have been completed. For instance, we cannot add sugar and milk to our cup of tea until the colander is out of the way, but we can fetch the milk and sugar at any time before we stir them into the tea.
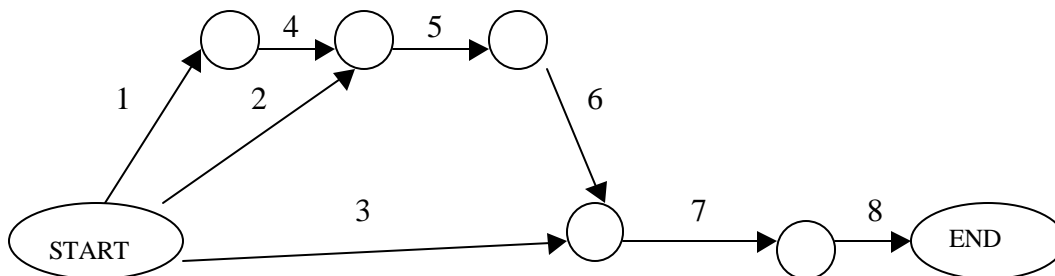
3.2   The Systems Development Life Cycle

"Systems" is a rather cold and mechanical word, but in reality once we organise people, procedures, activities, machines and such like to achieve a purpose, we have set up a system.

From time to time, such systems tend to become outdated and need to be renewed or replaced. Thus, the need for the systems development process.

The key indicator that it is time to check whether a system needs to be upgraded or replaced is a mounting dissatisfaction with its performance among those who have to live or work with it on the ground. If it is easy to express such unease, it may be vocalised. More often, however, it is reduced morale, falling support or repeated failures to fulfil expectations which are the warning lamps.

The first step in the development process is to ventilate frustrations and to investigate their roots. It is wise to set up a team to do this, one which draws its membership from those who work with the system, those who manage it, and those who consume or benefit from its products or services. It may also be wise to include specialists and systems experts, who can serve as resource persons.

Such a team conducts a **Preliminary Investigation** and produces a *feasibility report* with one of three recommendations:

> (1) Take no action -- no alternative offers better performance;
> (2) Maintain the system -- relatively small changes will suffice;
> (3) Develop a new system, in accordance with the attached analysis and recommendations.

The results of this investigation are evaluated, and appropriate action is taken. If a new system is to be developed, a development team is set up and goes to work:

1. **General Analysis and Design:** The report from the Preliminary Investigation and further technical investigations are used to generate an overall design for the new system. This design sets the framework for the detailed work to follow, and should ensure that the elements of the new system as it is developed in detail will work together satisfactorily. (Too often, individual components of a system work separately, but cannot work together.) The resulting specifications should be evaluated before moving on to the next phase.

2. **Detailed Design and Implementation:** In this phase, the detailed design, testing and development and/or procuring of components is carried through, and the system, at least as a *pilot test*, is put together "on the ground" and tested as thoroughly as possible. *Bugs* are ironed out, and the new system is *evaluated* by its prospective users and brought to an acceptable condition.

3. **Installation and Commissioning:** The new system is *installed*, workers are *trained*, managers are *briefed*, last minute bugs are ironed out, and the system is *commissioned* -- formally put into service. (At this point, the design team hands over responsibility for the system to management.)

Finally, the whole process is subjected to a formal **Review**, and lessons for the future are drawn and documented, so that the organisation can benefit from the system development experience. It is wise to update this final review on a regular basis, to see if the system lives up to its claims, and to detect when it, in turn, begins to become outdated or in need of maintenance.

3.3   Breakeven Analysis

Quite often, we have to charge for materials, price tickets for a concert, or set the fee for a retreat, camp or conference. Breakeven analysis provides a relatively simple but effective way to do this.

The key point of breakeven analysis is the observation that some costs vary more or less directly with the number of units sold, but others are relatively fixed:

TOTAL COSTS   =   FIXED COSTS + VARIABLE COSTS

VARIABLE COSTS =   COST PER UNIT x VOLUME OF SALE

TOTAL SALES   =   SELLING PRICE x VOLUME OF SALE
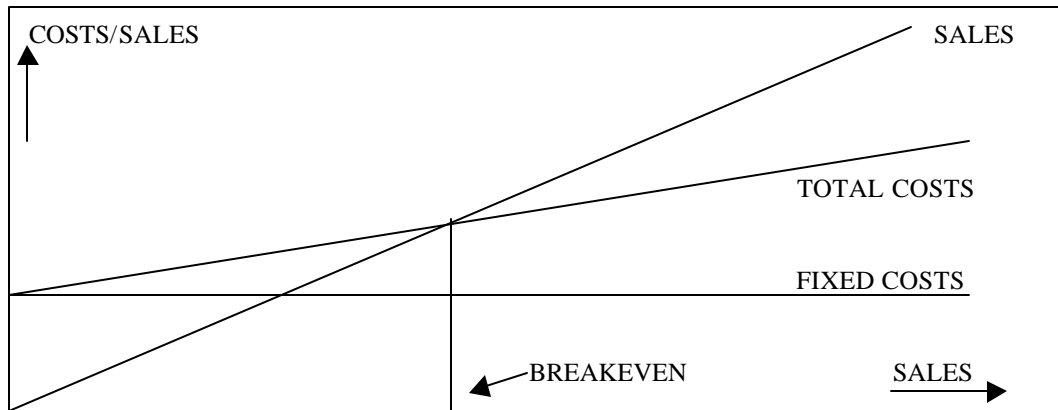
Thus, if we plot costs and sales versus volume of sales, as in the diagram, as long as the selling price per unit exceeds the cost per unit, at some volume of sale (the breakeven point) the income from sales will just equal the total costs, and if sales exceed this, there will be a profit. We can therefore estimate what volume of sale will break even at a given price, or what price will break even at a given volume, or what the profit or loss will be at given selling prices and volumes. (Often, however, the costs will not fall along a single straight line for all volumes, or may be curved, so costing must be very carefully done.)

A simple example will clarify the case. Suppose we rented a hall which seats 1,000 for $ 500, and that the additional cost per customer is $1.00. If we pay $100 to print tickets, and charge $ 5.00 per ticket, the breakeven point will be:

at breakeven, Total Costs (TC)	=	Total Sales (TS)
Sell Price (SP) x Vol of Sale (V)	=	Fixed Costs (FC) + Var Costs (VC)
	=	FC + V x Cost per Unit (UC)
so,	V x (SP - UC) =	FC
i.e.,	V x ($ 5 - $ 1) =	$ 500 + $ 100

or, breakeven volume,   V   = $ 600 / $ 4 = 150 customers

(Of course, it would be even easier to simply plot and read off the results from a graph.)

4.   Working With People

Even though there are many technical aspects, the planning-implementing process is, at its root, a human activity. Thus, if our plans are to be successful, we must be aware of how people work together as they try to develop and effect plans.

4.1   Working With Ourselves

It has been well said that "nothing works unless we do." The first person we each have to learn how to work with is our own self, and the key to managing our own selves -- and if we fail here, we can hardly expect to successfully manage others -- is whether we make the most of the 168 hours we all have and must spend each week.

Too often, deadlines creep up on us, forcing us to rush a job at the last minute, only to have to do it over to get it right. We are so busy doing what we feel like or reacting to the urgent demands of the moment that we never seize the initiative, so the truly important things just never seem to get done. We'd never dream of stealing another person's money, but we habitually steal his time by being late -- and it boomerangs, since "everybody knows it won't start on time," so we all stroll in half an hour late. No wonder so few meetings start or end on time. Further, because so few are prepared, the agenda for the meeting gets out of control, and it drags on and on.

Try a test. For the next week, keep a daily diary of how you spent your time, in quarter hour blocks. Make up a list of the things which are most important to you, and compare it with your diary. Brace yourself for the shock.

To get control over your time, go back over your list of things that are important to you. Refine the list by imagining that you have just been told that you have one year to live and asking yourself "What should I emphasise in the time I have left"? This will help prioritise your activities. (The key to priorities is that the higher one prevails in a conflict, so that, for instance, one should only sacrifice family relationships if the choice is between those relationships and your relationship with God. [See Matt 10:34 - 39, Mark 10:29 - 31, 1 Tim 5:8.])

In actuality, most students should have forty to fifty active years ahead of them. During those years, what do you want to accomplish? Where should you be in five years? Ten? Twenty? Thirty? How will these accomplishments weigh in the scales of eternity? Under God, what will your life's work be?

Once your priorities and life's goals are in order, it is much easier to manage your weekly, monthly and yearly activities:

1.   At the beginning of each year (or academic year) set aside time, perhaps a one-day retreat, to review and to plan for the year ahead. Pray, think about the past year and the year ahead, allocate blocks of time for major tasks or projects in the year ahead, and mark special dates, deadlines, anniversaries and appointments. (One of those Year-At-A-Glance single sheet calendars is grand for this job, and will become your most important time-management tool.)

2.   At the beginning of each week, glance over your year's calendar and make up a "To Do" list for each day of the week. Each day, during your devotions, update and pray about the list of activities for that day.

3.   On a monthly basis, update the plan for the year, paying special attention to delays: have you been less than diligent, or is it that the initial plan was unrealistic? (Unrealistic plans simply lead to frustration, so try to be realistic, setting aside adequate time to rest and recreate, and to handle unforseen difficulties and events.)

Other resources, especially money, may also require careful management, but the key point is that you are learning how to manage yourself, you are beginning to see progress towards your life goals, and your abilities as a leader are steadily growing.

4.2   Working With Other People

There are but few tasks of significance which can be done by one person working alone. Therefore, we need to learn how to work with other people. Three points are particularly important: the way groups work, the principles of delegation and coordination, and the conduct of committees.

4.2.1   Group Dynamics

Plans are made and implemented by groups of people. Out of the interaction between the members, the team they form, and the tasks they face, a definite pattern results:

1.   *Coming together* forces the group to work out relationships, roles, responsibilities, norms, goals, and tasks. Each person seeks to derive personal benefits - "What is this group doing for me? Is it what I want?"

2.   *Friction* results from trying to interact, communicate, and work together. Conflicts break out: "This is not what I really want! What will I do?"

3.   *Conflict* is the key. If correctly handled, it fuels the process of change. If not, it will deeply wound the individual, and can shatter the group, defeating its efforts.

4.   The best approach to *conflict management* first admits that conflicts exist. It sees them as neutral, even beneficial. Even Jesus conflicted with his Father in Gethsemane! It is

also willing to forgive hurts -- it only brings up problems to correct, encourage, and heal. It looks first for "the plank in your own eye," and only then will it speak to the other person. "Judge not, that you be not judged" speaks to just this point. Finally, it seeks to work out problems face to face -- "just between the two of you." (Matt 7:1-5, 18:15-17; I Cor. 13:3-7; Gal. 6:1-5.)

5.   *Conflict resolution* helps us get on with the job, as we co-operate as a team. Of course, resolving one conflict is no guarantee against another.

6.   Finally, no group is static. New people come in, and old ones go. Projects are completed, and groups wind up. We must learn to adjust and come to terms with success, failure, and goodbyes.

4.2.2   Delegation and Coordination

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, could be viewed as the first recorded management consultant. On a visit to the Israelites in the wilderness, he saw a "typical" day's work for Moses: judging cases from dawn to dusk. He took his son-in-law aside:

"What is this that you are doing?"

" . . . the people come to me . . . Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to   me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and   laws."

"What you are doing is not good. You and the people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone . . . You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people -- men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain -- and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you . . . you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." [Exodus 18:13 - 23.]

Like us, Moses had to learn how to delegate and coordinate. There is too much work for any one leader, so a wise leader gives out general guidelines, breaks up the overall task into manageable units, appoints and coordinates capable subordinates, and serves as the consultant for difficult cases (thus making new policy) . This reduces the workload, promotes rational decision-making, builds up future leaders, and improves the overall quality of results in both the short and the long term.

Three key principles can be laid down:

1.   Large tasks must be divided and delegated, so that each sub-task is the responsibility of one competent and faithful person, reporting to one immediate supervisor.

2.   Supervisors guide, coordinate, train and/or select subordinates, and are consulted on difficult cases. They must monitor and evaluate results, coordinating and correcting as necessary, but in as winsome a spirit as possible.

3.   Since each generation must pass off the scene, the development and selection of future leaders must always be borne in mind as performance is monitored and evaluated. (On campus, this happens in two to four years; in the wider community, usually in twenty to fifty.)

4.2.3   Committees

The Committee is the standard tool developed over the centuries for organising, delegating, coordinating, monitoring and controlling activities towards goals. As such, it is appropriate for us to take a brief look at how they are organised and work.

Committees come in two main flavours: Standing Committees, which form part of the permanent leadership structure of an organisation, and Select Committees, specially set up to carry through a specific project or handle an emergency.

The inner structure of a committee usually comprises a Chairman, a Deputy, a Secretary, a Treasurer and, as appropriate, specialist officers, experts or advisors; sometimes, there are representatives from the general body of the organisation:

1.   The Chairman coordinates the work of the committee, chairs meetings, and has overall responsibility for achieving results, deriving his authority from these roles and responsibilities.

2.   The Deputy Chairman acts in the absence of the Chairman, may have specific assigned duties, and generally supports the Chairman.

3.   The Secretary is responsible for keeping records, reports, files, and membership rolls, handles correspondence, and is often required to communicate notification about meetings to the general membership.

4.   The Treasurer is responsible for finances, and is one of the signatories to bank accounts for the body.

5.   Specialist officers, experts, advisors and representatives are added to the basic executive structure to handle special tasks, advise, or represent important interests.

The major tool for coordinating and monitoring work in a committee is the business meeting. Such a meeting follows an Agenda, which lists activities in the order they are to be dealt with.

As a rule, the first item of business is the reading, correction and adoption of the minutes of the last meeting, followed by reports, then unfinished and new business. Allocation of tasks, notices and adjournment round off the meeting. (The reading of minutes ties the meeting to previous ones, the giving of reports allows easy monitoring of progress and an easy transition into deliberations on old and new business, and the review of allocation of tasks ensures that officers are clear about what they have to do.)

More could be said, but it would fill a book. It is recommended that Committee Manuals and general handbooks, such as Robert's Rules of Order (The Modern Edition) be consulted for more details about formal procedure.

5.   Plans and Purposes

A gun is a useful, powerful tool. It is also very, very dangerous. That is why only a fool points a gun at something he does not intend to shoot if necessary.

It is the same with planning. If our plans are not aimed at the right purposes, they will be useless, or worse than useless. In particular:

> Unless the Lord builds the house,
> Its builders labour in vain.
> Unless the Lord watches over the city,
> The watchmen stand guard in vain.
> [Psalm 127:1.]

If we fail to work with God, our plans will be futile. Unless we seek to fulfill his purposes, our plans will ultimately fail. Those purposes are outlined in the Bible, which tells us that "He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe." [Eph 4:10.]

As we plan and work, then, let us seek to fill the world, and the Caribbean especially, with the glory of Christ [Eph 1:22, 23].

QUESTIONS

1.   What comes to mind when you hear the word "planning"? What, then, is your concept of planning?

2.   You have proposed a particular course of action. A fellow committee member challenges you: "But, did the Lord tell you we should do it that way?" How would you respond?

3.   Information is the basis for making wise decisions. How can you gather important information about issues, venues, costs, resource people, etc.?

4.   Plan a one day retreat for your cell group, using the techniques above. Discuss the plan with another leader, and see how it could be improved.

5.   What are your goals in life? How do they fit in under the Lordship of Jesus? How will you go about achieving them?

ENRICHMENT: DISCUSSION PAPER

For enrichment, the cell manual incorporates the following discussion paper on the mission and strategy of the church, which is at an even more advanced level than the section on general leadership skills above.   You may wish to read the paper, then take time, slowly, to discuss the issues it raises, in the context of the revival and reformation that our region so desperately needs. (Alternatively, you may wish to go through the associated book/course, Why Not Now?)

In your reading and discussions, you may wish to consider questions such as:

1. *Is it biblically established that Jesus came in order to fill all things, and so gave leaders to the church to equip the saints so they could then carry out such service to Christ that the church would grow up into that fulness that reflects its Head?*

2. *Do Christians have a legitimate calling that pulls us into active participation in all spheres of life in the Caribbean and wider world: family, church, school, campus, business, media, arts and entertainment, sports, institutions, government and politics, community life, etc?*

3. *How does such a concept handle the views that:*

   ▪ *The churches in the Caribbean — starting from being implicated in enslavement of the Amerindians and Africans — are part of the problem, not part of its solution?*
   ▪ *Historically, the church has so disastrously interfered into the community that it needs to be restricted from doing further damage?*
   ▪ *The church and its message are simply irrelevant to the insights, issues and ethics that we need to build a truly tolerant, non-homophobic, culturally rich, prosperous, eco-friendly, twenty-first century Caribbean?*
   ▪ *The world in these last days — as Bible Prophecy predicted — is so much under the domination of the evil one that the believer's primary duty is quiet witness so that at least a few brands can be plucked from the burning?*

4. *What strategies, structures and emphases are therefore the best for our present situation and future prospects?*

5. *How can cell/small group/ministry team structures and initiatives fit in with these initiatives?*

6. *What role should movements such as UCCF play in renewing and reforming the region?*

"Fullness" and our Mandate

> Jesus . . . said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." [Matt. 28:18 - 20; NIV.]

Classically, and commendably, Evangelicals in the Commonwealth Caribbean -- and worldwide -- have emphasised preaching the gospel; but we have also been surprisingly weak when it comes to broader aspects of our mandate to disciple the nations. Thus, our outreach, follow-up, nurture, and missions ministries far too often seem isolated from -- or even irrelevant to -- day to day Caribbean life, work, aspirations and thought. In the colourful words of Barbadian History Professor and Cricket Researcher Dr. Hilary Beckles:

> There is no political movement that connects its manifesto to the idealism of the historic struggle for social change with justice. As a consequence, the region's 'labour parties' have become anti- labour, and workers everywhere are running for shelter and leadership within the walls of a revivalist evangelical christianity [*sic*] that now commands the communities' largest social gatherings.
>
> The death of social idealism, and the triumph, for example, of 'born-again religious escapism,' signal the abandonment of the youth to apolitical social engagements, and the defeat of the nationalist, regionalist projects to which cricket has been hinged since the 1950s. Within this context of failure, cricket is asked to carry the cross of a crucified political agenda whose leaders have lost all popular emotional appeal. [Beckles, 1996; p.75.]

While perhaps these words are both too sweeping and sharp, there is enough that rings true for us to face the issue they raise: our isolation from the wider Caribbean culture, and its consequences. The roots of this isolation are complex, but it is well known that they largely spring from our all too prevalent divisiveness and the West's general acceptance of the Enlightenment's secular/sacred dichotomy. In turn, this secular agenda originated as part of a strategy to minimise the damaging impact of religious persecutions and wars on the general community, by isolating "Religion" or "Faith" from real life. [Cf. Bloom, Schaeffer, Whitehead, etc.]

In short, the church's sad history of sectarianism, persecution and religiously motivated wars lent credibility to those who sought to "separate" Christ and culture; not just "church and state." Thus, western culture, gradually but ever more rapidly, has been systematically secularised over the past several centuries, leading to the church's forced withdrawal from the wider culture. As a result, we have increasingly failed to motivate and equip disciples to lead the community under Christ, or even -- given the trend to turn faith into a quiet, private hobby -- to collectively demonstrate a godly lifestyle that bears effective witness to the transforming power of Jesus through the gospel. This has further blunted our credibility.

But at the same time, secularism itself has proved to be morally bankrupt and unable to fill man's innate hunger for God. The net result has been to set the stage for those who are now feverishly working to paganise modern culture [cf. Rom. 1:18 - 32 & Eph. 4:17 - 24], even here in the Caribbean. It also lends credibility to the strategy of the oil-funded Islamic mission to the West: projecting an idealised Islamic alternative to the West's decadence, secularism, racism, oppression and neo-paganism.

We Evangelicals have often compounded the above by our tendency to so strongly expect things to get worse and worse in "the world" (until the Heavenly cavalry rides up at the parousia), that we become fatalistic or apathetic in response to evil trends in our communities. Thus, we tend to commit the fallacy of the self-fulfilling prophecy, by giving in to an unjustifiable Last Days fatalism and abandoning the civil arena to the ungodly. [Cf. paragraphs 2.3 & 4 below.] How apt, then, is Edmund Burke's rebuke: "all that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to stand by and do nothing"!

 In sum, our divisiveness and withdrawal from the marketplace of ideas, values and visions have fed a dynamic of isolation and disintegration into the church and culture alike, and so are dangerous betrayals of the gospel and our mandate under Christ. For instance, can we honestly say that, both over time and here and now, we Christians "make *every* effort to keep the *unity* of the Spirit through the bond of *peace* . . . . speaking the *truth* in *love*"? [Eph 4:3, 15a.] What of Paul's point in Eph 2:8 - 10: "it is by grace you have been saved, through faith . . . not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do"? Given the immediate context: "the church . . . **is** his body, the fulness of him who **fills** *every*thing in *every* way" [1:22 - 23], can we reasonably believe that the intellectual, cultural, arts, values and public policy/political/community leadership arenas are "exceptions" to these "good works"?

The answers are clear, and sad. [Cf. Col. 1:15, 16!] Therefore, let us pause, reassess our perspectives and praxis by the light of the NT, develop a coherent, integrated operational understanding of our discipling mandate, and obey our Lord by putting it into effect, teaching "all nations . . . to obey everything [Jesus has] commanded."

## 1.	Ephesians, the Fulness of Christ Vision and our Mandate

In Ephesians, Paul summarises the Church's global mandate in sweeping cosmic and operational terms; thus stating what we may term an *Operational Form of the Church's Discipling Mandate*, one that emphasises the overarching goal: "to fill all things — *panta* — [with Christ]." He thus outlines the integrating principle that has the power to break the modern church's gospel-betraying dynamic of divisiveness, separation, isolation and disintegration:

> . . . [God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment -- *to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

> (. . . He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, *in order to fill the whole universe [*panta *-- all things].*) It was he who gave some to be apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers *to* prepare God's people for works of service, *so that* the body of Christ may be built up *until* we all reach unity in the faith *and* in the knowledge of the Son of God *and* become mature, *attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ . . . .* speaking the truth in love, *we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* From him the whole body, joined and held together [i.e. united!] by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

> I pray . . . that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand . . . And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for *the church,*

> *which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way.* [Eph. 1:9, 10, 4:9-16, 1:18-23, NIV.]

First and foremost, Jesus is the unifying or integrating principle of the Universe; he thus moves it from demonically dominated sinful chaos, death and decay, to wholesome life and godly harmonious order, or cosmos: the Father *purposes* "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." Therefore, Jesus came, descending, dying for our sins, rising and ascending "in order to fill the whole universe." And, the church "is his body, the fulness of him who fills *everything* in every way," the means by which Christ will fill the ordered system of reality, *panta* -- "all things." To effect this on the ground, he "*gave* . . . apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers, **to** *prepare God's people* for works of service, **so that** the body of Christ *may be built up . . . attaining to* the whole measure of the fulness of Christ . . . **as** each part *does* its work." Fourthly, given the focus on discipling the nations as disciples go out into the world, this filling of "the whole universe" is an ongoing process: cumulative, progressive — cf. Eph. 3:21, NIV: "to [God] be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus *throughout all generations"* — and global.

Nationhood under Christ is therefore a key — but too often neglected — aspect of our discipling message and mandate. Paul stressed this in speaking to the leaders of Athens — the wellspring of the Western intellectual, artistic and democratic traditions — about nationhood under God: "From one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times — *kairous* — set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." [Acts 17:26 - 27.] In short, God created nationhood to foster godliness, and so controls critical times and places in the lives of nations that men are shaken from complacency and self-satisfaction or from apathy and hopelessness, thus are opened to the gospel. Into that ferment, he sends his people with the gospel, as his body, "the fulness of him who fills everything in every way," able to transform and bless the whole community by Christ's resurrection power!

This speaks straight to us in the Caribbean in our time, for we are clearly passing through a time of ever-increasing crises. Of course, in "such a time as this," our nations are also vulnerable to demons and their dupes, "blind leaders of the blind," who will "tickle [our] itching ears" with what we want to hear, but who can only lead us as far as the nearest ditch. [Luke 6:39, 40; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4.] Such dupes will fight the gospel (sadly, for many, to their eternal loss), but that only means that we must prize and use discernment under God as we seek the way forward for our region. So, the overall result is rather like the rising tide on a beach: individual waves advance and retreat, but inexorably the water level rises until full tide arrives. Just so, Christ is the rising tide of history, a tide that will reach its permanent high water mark at the Parousia. [cf. Dan. 2:24 - 45.] Thus, while some communities and generations, to their loss, will reject the gospel (typically, because they are misled by their elites) — others, of course, will accept it — such a rejection is not the *ultimate* trend of history! [Cf. John 4:39 - 42; Acts 8:4 - 14, 9:35]

 Therefore, let us heed Paul's "***everything***," [Eph. 1:23] and Jesus' "make disciples of ***all*** nations [*ethnoi:* i.e. people-groups, with their characteristics: languages, histories, cultures, aspirations] . . . baptising . . . and teaching them to obey ***everything*** I have commanded you" [Mt. 28:19]. In short, we should view our mandate as calling us to systematically disciple the nations under Jesus' Lordship, in the power of his Spirit, evangelising, baptising, nurturing and training them to follow his commands and example, progressively filling all of life — family, individuality and sexuality, education, music, entertainment, sports, the arts, "culture," business, the media, government, politics, peoplehood/nationhood . . . EVERY-thing — with his fulness. As a direct result, we must integrate and articulate what we all too often

compartmentalise and contrast -- sometimes, even dismiss -- as "Evangelism," "Discipling," "Family Ministry," "Social Action," "Issues," "Business," "The Arts," "Political Involvement," and so on.

"Political Involvement" flashes a red flag, and "the historic struggle for social change with justice" continues to be an only partially resolved issue; the Caribbean's as yet unfinished history of oppression has often made us vulnerable to the siren songs of would-be political messiahs and their agendas, "crucified" or otherwise.

Logically, this whip-scar on our backs should be our first example of how "fulness" speaks into the real world:

1. Rom. 13:1 - 7, esp. 4, is clear: since the civil authority "is God's *servant*," he will clearly be better qualified "to do you good" if he openly accepts and lives by that fact! As Prov. 29:2 observes: "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan." [Cf. 2 Sam. 22 and 23, and Prov. 31:1 - 9.]

2. Moreover, in Matt. 28:18 Jesus states "*All authority* in heaven and *on earth has been given to me,*" with Paul adding "He *is* the image of the invisible God, the *firstborn over all creation*. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, *whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities*; all things were created *by* him and *for* him." [Col. 1:15, 16.] Jesus' Lordship, including over the political sphere, **is** a present, ongoing reality that shall ultimately put down all rebellion and injustice: "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above *every* name, that at the name of Jesus *every knee* should bow, in heaven and *on earth* and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Phil. 2:9 - 11. All emphases added.]

3. If, as we have just seen, Jesus came "in order to fill *panta* [all things]," then the real issue leaders, people, institutions and communities face is "In what way?" -- with God's healing, renewing grace as they repent, or else with the fierce fire of God's justice poured out in judgement. (Cf. Acts 17:24 - 31, Rev. 18:1 - 24, and Deut. 8:1 - 20. If we reckon with the account of the Flood and its aftermath, paganism is an advanced state of "forget[ting] God," as Rom. 1:18 - 32 highlights; the sending of the gospel is actually an act of God's mercy to men who "are without excuse.")

4. Therefore, while we should pray for rulers to so govern that "we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" [1 Tim.2:2, cf. Titus 2:1 - 3:8] -- which implies that they should implement policies of justice, liberty and basic morality (which naturally foster an atmosphere conducive to the gospel) -- we must also follow the example set by the apostles in responding to rulers demanding disobedience to the gospel mandate: "We must obey God rather than men!" [Acts 5:29.] While we are not to rebel, rejecting the right of legitimate authorities to rule and exact taxes to support that rule, we must observe that the civil authority "is God's servant to do [us] *good . . .* an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the *wrongdoer*." [Rom 13:4, cf. 1 - 7.] Thus, where such a servant oversteps his proper limits, we are in order to point out the fact and appeal to our own duty as God's servants also; which is just what the apostles did.

5.   This can be difficult. Typically, worldly elites control those they lead by manipulating rewards and/or punishments, and by projecting an aura of confidence, power and prestige. They therefore often slip into decision-making and promotion based on power considerations, rather than humble, godly wisdom and servant leadership. [Cf. Mk. 10:35 - 45 & Prov. 3:1 - 10.] Soon, yes-men crowd around such leaders, and the quality of decisions falls as "the prudent man keeps quiet in such times." [Amos 5:13.] By contrast, insight, vision, initiative and the power to bond with and inspire people -- the core of leadership -- can come from anywhere and "anyone," especially since "the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. . . [he] has spoken -- who can but prophesy?" [3:7 & 8.] Thus, we come to "the prophet's dilemma": to speak or act is to provoke jealous wrath, as David experienced at Saul's hands [1 Sam. 18:6 - 9], but to be silent in the face of evil or folly -- even in the name of "praying for leaders" -- is to fail as a watchman. [Ezekiel 33:1 - 9.] But, true courage is to do one's duty, even in the face of danger.

6.   Therefore, human authority only functions properly when it walks under true -- that is, godly-- wisdom and humility. And, while our respect and prayer are always appropriate, cowardly silence or abject surrender in the face of tyranny and folly, or pressures to disobey God, are not. Nor, should we neglect the example of choice servants of God: *prophets* such as Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha, Amos, Jeremiah, and Daniel; *statesmen/civil servants* such as Joseph, Daniel (again!), Ezra [cf. Ezra 7:11 - 26], and Nehemiah (all of whom served in pagan governments); and *kings* such as David, Hezekiah and Josiah.   Christians are called to be prophetic -- not selfish, craven, servile, blind or naive -- as we live, work and serve God in *"all"* aspects of the community, clearly including the public policy arena.

7.   Finally, in all things our attitude "should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" -- the true, crucified and risen Messiah -- "[w]ho, being in very nature God . . . humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Phil 2:5 - 11; cf. Isaiah 45:18 - 24.]

Our Mandate therefore goes far beyond winning converts who mainly support "our" church meetings and programmes by attendance, praying for us and opening their wallets! Instead, we are called to walk under a vision to fill "all things" with Christ, so that a Christocentric dynamic of unity and integration will spread through both church and culture, progressively filling every activity, relationship, context and involvement in our communities -- and world -- with Christ.

2.   The Power of the Fulness of Christ Vision "on the Ground"

The Christocentric Fulness Vision directly forces us to review how we have tended to think about and work towards fulfilling our Commission, thence to a more naturally integrated and focussed approach to ministry, especially the work of winning, nurturing and sending out effective disciples into the world:

1.   **Ministry Strategy:** Our evangelistic, follow-up, discipling, nurturing/pastoral and general outreach ministries should work together to encourage, train and coordinate

disciples who progressively understand and apply the above fulness of Christ agenda to every activity, relationship and involvement in their lives, communities, nations and world.

2. **The Rising Tide:** While, clearly, it is only "when the times will have reached their fulfillment" that the filling process will be complete, even now the Kingdom incrementally advances — in the midst of a myriad tiny victories and setbacks — an ever rising tide that shall ultimately triumph over an increasingly desperate satanic chaos. Thus, we read of "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all . . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him"; because, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." [Acts 10:36, 38 & 1 John 3:8; cf. John 10:10.] The defeat of slavery and the recent, almost bloodless, fall of world-threatening Communism are only two striking examples: as history shows, both of these victories were organically linked to the progress of the gospel.

3. **Last Days Witness:** At Pentecost — fulfilling Joel's prophecy of "the last days" — the remedy to Mystery Babylon was proclaimed: "*In the last days*, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people . . . . And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [Acts 2:17, 21 (emphasis added); cf. Joel 1 - 3, esp. 2:18 - 32; also Rev. 12:7 - 12, & Chapters 20, 21.] Properly understood, then, the Last Days — for two thousand years now — have been the era in which God is acting globally: pouring out his Spirit "on all people," offering Salvation to "everyone" who receives Jesus, and progressively "fill[ing] the whole universe[*panta*]" with Christ as the church "grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work," i.e. discipling the nations under the Lordship of Jesus.

4. **Fatalism vs. Proactive Vision:** We are in an age of worldwide eternal hope, rather than one of despair! Instead of fretfully constructing Apocalyptic Charts and Scenarios to try to figure out "times and dates" — of which Jesus warned "It is not for you to know" — let us rather pursue our true task: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth." So,"this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and *then* the end will come." [Cf. Acts 1:4 - 8; also, see Matt. 24:3 - 14 & 36 - 51, and Gen. 2:4 - 3:24.] Let us seize the initiative!

5. **Developing Concrete Goals:** We have been pretty general so far. To be concrete and specific, let us take any aspect of the world, say family life and sexuality in the Caribbean, or the rum shop around the corner. Then, Bibles in hand, let us probe with prayerful questions: (1) What does this "thing" look like now? (2) If it were full of Christ's grace, glory and goodness, what would it become? (3) What should *we* do about the gap between the two? (4) When? (5) How? (6) Why? Thus, we can focus on one "thing" in the cosmos, and highlight the tension between what it is and what it could become if filled by God's grace, setting a framework for planning, witnessing and discipling. But, what if the leaders or people involved in this "thing" reject the message and initiative of grace? In that case, they will simply have chosen to be filled with God's just wrath, rather than his gracious mercy. (Given the sad — and unfinished — history of

Christians inflicting violence in the name of Christ, I must hasten to add here that it is *God* who wields the sword of judgement, not us: "for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." [James 1:20.])

6. **Preparation for Dynamic Christian Service:** Such a fulness Bible Study highlights the truth that we are all called to serve Christ in each aspect of life. Doubtless, it will also often throw a bright light on our lack of the knowledge and skills required for effective action. Thus, we must give attention to the church's nurture and training task, and its context: the need for each of us to discover, explore, develop and fulfill his or her unique *calling*, the specific "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." [Eph. 2:10.]

For this, our painful life experiences are a critical aspect: "God . . . comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also, through Christ, our comfort overflows." [2 Cor 1:3 - 5.] A further dimension of our preparation is our gifts: "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." [1 Cor. 12:7.] Bible Study and its diligent application to life are critical [2 Tim 3:14 - 17], as is prayer [Acts 6:1 - 4]. We can ill-afford to neglect purity of thought and deed, and growth in love as we prepare for lifetime service in the family, church, community and world. [See 1 Cor. 13:1 - 14:1, Gal. 5:13 - 6:5.]

The programmatic aspect of such preparation and training naturally falls into three overlapping phases, each typically taking several months to several years:

> *I -- Consolidating Commitment:* helping people work through the basic decisions, changes, healings and liberations, learning, perspectives, commitments, relationships, attitudes, skills and habits involved in taking up one's cross and following Jesus. [Matt 16:24 - 27.]

> *II -- Basic Service and Leadership,* as the focus gradually shifts to basic ministry processes and skills, training can stress the church's mission, our part in it, and basic leadership and ministry in dyad (one-to-one) and in the small groups oriented to outreach, nurture or specific ministry areas (such as drama or social welfare).

> *III -- Community Service and Leadership.* The third phase stresses specific gifts and skills for lifetime service and leadership in the family, church, workplace, community and world, as we work to fill each of its aspects with Christ. This last phase therefore prepares disciples for proactive community and institutional service and leadership under Christ. And, once the cross-cultural aspect is added, we will mobilise the whole church for missions.

[Those interested in details may wish to consult the associated ABCD -- A Basic Course in Discipleship -- proposals.]

7.   **NT Paradigm:** Acts 2:37 - 47 shows how such biblical discipleship and body life work powerfully into into a community, forming a true local church (i.e. the body of Christ living in and working to fill its local community with Christ):

> 1.   Spirit-empowered preaching, often accompanie d by signs and wonders, "publicly and from house to house" [Acts 20:20; cf. 2:46 & 5:42], cut hearts by calling "all people everywhere to repent" [17:30]. Those who "accepted [the gospel] message were baptised," a visible mark of commitment to Christ, his mission, and the church, which is his body.
>
> 2.   The church's members "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" and grew as a nurturing, training, worshipping, witnessing and serving community, with stresses on learning, outreach, mutual support and sharing (even of possessions, cf. 4:32 - 5:11), helping the poor, prayer, praise, the fellowship meal [cf. 1 Cor. 10:16, 17!], and large and small group meetings (in the temple and homes respectively).
>
> 3.   Evangelistic witness was so constant an aspect of body life that "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved," and when "all except the apostles were scattered . . . . Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went." [8:1, 4.]   Clearly, outreach in and beyond the local community was a daily aspect of the lifestyle of the *ordinary* church member.

8.   **Small Groups Strategy:** By contrast with large groups, small groups are intimate, highly interactive, and flexible. (The West Indies Test Cricket Team is an excellent, topical, and ongoing regional case study!) They are thus open to spontaneity, mutual encouragement, nurture, accountability, discipline and low risk experimentation; skilled leaders will also find it easy to closely observe and coordinate activities towards group goals.

Cells are therefore ideal contexts for sorting out the issues and commitments involved in beginning to follow Christ, and for developing, training in and carrying out team ministry. By making use of existing community infrastructure — especially homes — and voluntary/tent-making staff, cells also provide a cost-effective way to mobilise, train and organise the people of God. No wonder, then, that Jesus focussed so much time and effort on the twelve in his earthly ministry.

In such small, highly interactive, groups for expressing body life and service on a practical scale, people will easily find the encouragement, opportunities, relationships, mutual support, counselling, discipline, training and coordination [Acts 2:41 - 47, Eph. 4:11 - 16] that undergird effective discipleship and outreach. It is these dynamics that we see at work in good families/households, circles of friends, committees, ministry groups, retreats, etc. Thus, we need to consider and apply the strategy of a growing network of small groups of disciples backed up by strongly synergistic nurturing, outreach and special-purpose ministry teams.

9.   **Group Dynamics:** Clarifying notes on dyad, small and large group dynamics are helpful:

1. ***Dyad*** fosters dialogue and concentrates example down to its most effective form: one person with one other person. It is therefore ideal for counselling, close friendships and apprenticeship, but by that very concentration, cannot be sustained over a long period by any one individual working with more than a few people.

2. ***The large group*** multiplies the reach of its leader by broadcasting spoke-like communications to the group as a whole, a process which can be extended without limit by mass media; in so multiplying numbers, however, we are forced to sacrifice interaction, except on a sampling basis. (And, such sampling can be highly misleading.)

3. ***The small group*** integrates the two: since it is small and intimate, it fosters multiple dyad interactions, leading to a network of close relationships. When it meets, it is easy for each member in turn to "broadcast" to the whole group [cf. 1 Cor 14:26]; but success requires a growing willingness to take the risks of trust and participation, and a leadership style that values and encourages -- especially by habitual example, invitation and affirmation -- the perspectives and contributions of *all* members. (Where these are lacking, small groups rapidly deteriorate into undersized large groups, as too often happens with, say, Sunday School classes.)

10. **The Bible and Cells:** Cells, however, are often viewed as an optional, or even undesirable, extra; I believe this is a sub-biblical view. God himself exists as Trinity; he created man in family; Jesus and the Apostles based their work on small ministry teams; the early church often met in homes; and Paul, in describing a typical church service, expects that all of those present can individually and significantly contribute — which is *only* possible in a small group. [1 Cor. 14:23 - 26.]

    Moreover, the NT view is that each disciple is called and gifted for ministry as a member of the body of Christ, which therefore suffers when its members are handicapped by lack of opportunity, training, encouragement, support and coordination. [Eph. 2:8 - 10, 4:11 - 16, etc.] Of course, Jethro's advice to Moses that he break down the task of judging Israel into small groups of ten families each [Exodus 18:5 - 26] models how cell structures can be used to delegate nurturing, training, coordinating and decision-making leadership/pastoral responsibilities. [Church Growth Movement observations suggest that this can then open the way for unlimited growth for, for instance, a congregation. The Korean and Argentine experience provide helpful models.]

    In light of the above known potential of small group structures, the importance of gifts and body ministry, and Paul's comments on "typical" first century church services, do we need to look any further for an explanation of the breakdown of effective body life and service in the church in our region?

11. **Networking, Synergy and"the-Already-and-Not-Yet" Factor:** As we use ***win-, nurture- and send-*** focused cells*,* then, small *outreach groups* (eg. office prayer groups, evangelistic Bible study and discussion groups), *nurture-focussed cells* (eg. cottage/house

groups, campus cell groups), and *ministry teams* (eg. music groups, Dorcas circles, committees, presbyteries [cf. *The New Bible Dictionary*], Christian professional teams/enterprises, missionary teams) will greatly multiply opportunities for — and involvement in — outreach, nurture, training and effective ministry.

"Christian professional teams/enterprises" in the above requires clarification. Such teams — by participating in the professional (and/or artisanal) services markets and providing training and/or internship programmes in an explicitly Christian framework — can open career opportunities for disciples and can serve as vehicles for filling the business culture with Christ. As such, they can be viewed as ministry teams with a mission to the market place, and are a significant aspect of the proposed renewal strategy.

We must also note that the effective coordination, thus synergy, of the various small groups depends on their integration into larger scale church structures: congregations, campus outreach fellowships, parachurch organisations and other wider ministry organisations, networks and federations, of which the Missionary Society is an excellent example. Such wider organisations or networks provide a sense of community and vision, support infrastructure, accountability, doctrinal stability, leadership training, consultation for difficult cases [cf. Exodus 18:13 - 26] and other similar necessary facilities. When they are lacking, small group initiatives often falter, become sidetracked or even slide into heresy or abusive behaviour.

Thus, in the life of the church, there is a need to emphasise the small group (especially the family), dyad and one's individual relationship with God; but these structures can only safely function when they are integrated into the wider church in the community and world. Using such balanced structural elements, we can work to build and scale up large-scale body-life based <u>networks</u> of disciples and ministry-facilitating structures, forming powerful (but not perfect!) working models — shining cities "set upon a hill" in a world of "night and fog" — of what shall be in perfect fulness at the Parousia. This brings out the "already-and-not-yet" aspect of the fulness vision.

12. **Divisiveness:** We dare not ignore the poison of divisiveness. Eph. 4:14 -16 stresses our mutual responsibility to strengthen and unite the Church in love, and to guard against deception and divisiveness, thus moderating and constructively harnessing conflict to help us grow and serve together in love. (Once it is so harnessed, conflict becomes the fuel that motivates and stimulates progress. Otherwise, it will be the explosive that drives us apart into disintegration.) This balance is vital as we seek to avoid sectarian divisiveness [cf. John 17:20 - 23, 1 Cor. 3:1 - 23, Gal. 5:19 - 21, 26], and as we strive to guard and contend for "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" [Jude 3] in the emerging global marketplace of ideas.

3. Responding to the Sectarian Dynamic in the Caribbean

Sadly, the above framework sharply contrasts with the modern church in the Caribbean, which in any typical community is splintered into dozens of competing -- often quarrelling -- sects and parachurch groups, and is largely organised around the Theatre Principle: stage, Ministers/participants, and the ministered-to/audience.

 The party-spiritedness must be dealt with first, as it is tantamount to *treason* against our Mandate. Specifically, if "God so loved the world" that he sent his Son, and the unity and love of those who receive the Son is a strong proof of that loving and sending, then our divisiveness directly undercuts the gospel! [Cf. John 17:20 - 23; Acts 20:17 - 35, esp. 26 - 31, 1 Cor. 3:1 - 17, James 3:1 - 4:2, & Eph. 4: 14 - 16.] It is thus vital for us to pause and respond to disunity.

For this purpose, the OT history of disobedience, divisiveness and apostasy among the Jewish people is instructive, especially in light of Paul's remark: "these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." [1 Cor. 10:6.] While his specific context relates to incidents during the forty years of wandering in the desert, the principle of learning from a bad example is plain.

God raised up Moses and many other Prophet-Statesmen-Deliverers to lead Israel, culminating in Samuel. "When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges . . . But his sons did not walk in his ways," prompting the elders of Israel to say "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." [1 Samuel 8:1 - 5; cf. Deut. 17:14 - 20, which anticipated and regulated just this situation.]

Samuel was displeased with the request for a king, but God's response was: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do." [vv. 7 - 9.]

Samuel duly warned that kings would become oppressive. Saul, the first king, came to a sad end and the kingdom passed to David. By the time Solomon's son Rehoboam ascended to the throne, the people, weary under the weight of a superficial prosperity that stood on a foundation of forced labour and burdensome taxes, begged him: "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labour and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." [1 Kings 12:4.]

His infamous reply, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scouraged you with whips; I will scourage you with scorpions," [v. 14] provoked rebellion under Jeroboam, son of Nebat, leading to the split into Israel and Judah, "to fulfil the word that the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam . . . through Ahijah the Shilonite." [2 Chronicles 10:15, cf. 1 Kings 11:1 - 13, 26 - 39.]

 As Jeroboam sought to consolidate his power, he considered: "If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem . . . They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam." [1 Kings 12: 27.] So, he disobeyed God's word to him: "If you . . . walk in my ways . . . I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David." [1 Kings 11:38.] He therefore erected altars and idols at Bethel and Dan, built shrines on high places and "appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites" [1 Kings 12:31], then set up a new festival on a day of his own choosing and "went up to the altar to make offerings." [v. 33; cf. God's judgement of Saul when he usurped the role of a priest in 1 Sam. 15; also see 1 Kings 13 and 2 Kings 23 for God's later response through Josiah: destruction of the apostate system.]

A pattern emerges: as the people of God felt the consequences of their disobedience, they cast about for a king (other than God) to unite and lead them, copying the surrounding pagan nations. The grass turned out to be no greener on the other side of the fence. Further dissatisfactions in the face of increasing

oppression built up, giving an opening for the seriously flawed but clearly capable and ambitious Jeroboam to champion the oppressed people, trigger a split and rise to power over the juicier chunk. Then, to consolidate his power, Jeroboam took the one step too far: in defiance of God's promises and warnings, he set up apostate institutions for fear that loyalty would soon revert to Rehoboam.

The amazing thing is how democratically God acted towards his disobedient people in the process, giving them very real choices, up to the limit of apostasy. Though he pointed out that the true cause of their troubles was disobedience and that by asking for a man to be king they were both rejecting God as king and opening the door to oppression, he gave them a king. When kings became disobedient, first the dynasty was changed, then the kingdom was divided, both with significant popular involvement. It is only when Jeroboam defiantly set up apostate structures that destructive judgement was pronounced, and ultimately carried out: the divided, complacent [cf. Amos 6:1-7], apostate covenant people proved to be no match for the wiles, idols -- and ultimately, armies -- of the surrounding pagan nations. Sadly, long after the exile in Babylon, Jesus had to observe: "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." [Mark 7:8; cf. Deut. 8:17ff.]

One does not have to look far to find parallels in the history of the church. Time and again, we have disobeyed God, set up abuse-prone leadership structures, and followed wolves in shepherd's clothing. Such (mis-) leaders work to "distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them," being men (and women) who love "to be first." Characteristically, they then cut their followers off from -- and attack, discredit, or persecute -- true Christian disciples and leaders outside of their circles of power, "refus[ing] to welcome the brothers . . . stop[ping] those who want to do so and put[ting] them out of the church." [Acts 20:30, 3 John 9, 10.] Thus, selfishly ambitious leaders have often exploited ignorance, fear and unmet needs to create splinter groups, which they then domineer and isolate from the rest of the church; once this happens, the door to full apostasy yawns open.

In the Caribbean, our history of plantation-based slavery haunts and poisons our self-concept, family life, relationships, thinking, institutions and initiatives; intensifying the above. Old Pirate's Plantation was based on the health-breaking forced labour of field hands, which went to support debt-ridden opulence among domestic slaves (who were often sexually exploited) in his Great House. To reduce the risk of revolt, positive leadership was crushed, and slaves were set against one another over colour, type of work, access, sex, and status: "divide, and rule."

Thus, racially-based self-rejection and mutual abuse; ruthless secretive power, greedy exploitation, resistance to positive change, financial imprudence and dependency; suspicion, backbiting and talebearing servility; family breakdown, sexual abuse, manipulation and immorality; lies, fear, injustice, tyranny, rebellion and violence were planted deep in Caribbean soil. And for the approximately four generations since chattel slavery was formally abolished, we have continued to reap the ratoons. Even our "liberation" movements have too often only managed to create new overlords and circles of "yesmen," and "yardfowls" or "facecards" [sycophants], rather than breaking the plantation paradigm. (Paul's "you are God's field" [1 Cor 3:9] is a telling contrast: the church is God's fertile field, sowed, watered and nurtured by wise, caring stewards; who will account to him for the quality of their service! [Cf. Luke 12:35 - 48 & Col. 3:18 - 4:1; also 1 Cor. 7:17 - 24, esp. 21, 23. Also, the *New Bible Dictionary*, on "Slave, Slavery."])

Sadly, but understandably, after centuries of disobedience, quarrelling, rebellion, splintering, selfish leadership, and other sub- or even anti- biblical practices, there is much confusion, mistrust and dissention in and around the church in the Caribbean (and, world) today. We have suffered dozens, even hundreds,

of cycles of the splintering dynamic; it would thus be naive (or, presumptuous) to simply assume that any given structure, teaching or practice, regardless of its age or respectability -- or, its novelty! -- within our various traditions, denominations, congregations and ministries, is as God intended it. Clearly, we must give priority to careful biblical and historical study, with an eye to *repentance* from apostasy, sin and error; *renewal* to restore truly godly -- that is, biblical -- structures; and *reconciliation* among the leaders and members of the one true body of Christ, if we are to fulfil rather than betray our mandate.

Jesus' high priestly prayer must have the last word on this mission-critical matter: "I pray for those who will believe on me through [the disciples'] message, that all of them may be one Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*." [John 17:20 - 23, italics added.]

4.   Renewing the Church's Structures, Strategies and Systems Under our Mandate

God's purpose is to integrate the universe under Christ's headship, filling it with his glory through the church. Unfortunately, we have too often allowed ourselves to be isolated from positively impacting the world's cultures, and instead have been pervaded by its divisiveness, disintegration, selfish ambition, envy and corruption. [Cf. James 3:13 - 4:12.] Therefore, if we are to fulfil rather than continue to betray our Mandate, repentance, reconciliation and renewal must take priority on our agenda.

Repentance and reconciliation are more or less personal, so it is appropriate for us to focus on the renewal that must break the sub-biblical assumptions and systems implicit in our prevalent Theatre-based model of church life, and return us to the NT's family-centred, body-life oriented framework [cf. Eph. 4:17 - 6:9], within which repentance and reconciliation may -- in the providence of God -- lead to sorely needed revival, triggering reformation of our region.

Such renewal must first analyse the key institution of the church in our day: the denominationally affiliated local assembly or "church," led by "the Minister" or "the Priest" [originally, short for *presbyter,* "elder"], focused on large group-based worship services and smaller "auxiliaries" -- a telling word -- such as the Sunday School, mostly meeting in "the church" building, the expenses of which dominate finances. Sadly, all too often, leadership is "onstage," centralised and autocratic; rather than following Jesus' servantly, exemplary and collegial model. [cf. John 13:1 - 17; Luke 6:39, 40 & 1 Peter 5:1 - 4; Mk. 3:13 - 19; Titus 1:5 - 16 (nb. the multiplicity of leadership, v. 5; cf. Acts 13:1 -5, 15:1 - 35, 20:17 ff., etc.).]

Such an assembly is usually tied to a network of other congregations, under the doctrinal (and often, administrative) control of its Denomination, typically with headquarters in a metropolitan country (often the United States) -- but "the local church" may have little to do with members of "a different church" down the street.

In turn, the Denomination (a structure which grew out of our history of splintering) relates to the various Bible Schools, publishing and media houses, other parachuch ministries and intra- and inter-denominational ministries and movements such as music bands, student and youth ministries, various charismatic and other "renewal" groups, and the ecumenical movement in varying ways, ranging from cordiality to outright hostility. Hovering in the background are other Denominations, the cults and traditional and novel non-Christian religions, with the State's legal and administrative frameworks

exerting subtle, but powerful and potentially devastating constraints, as can be seen from the ongoing uneasy church-state situation in the United States (which often sets the pattern for the Caribbean).

Thus, while our cultural milieu has many significant parallels to that of the first century Roman Empire -- even to our rising tide of decadence, flood of eastern cults, inefficient and often corrupt or even tyrannical governments, and unstable economies -- it is too often hard to draw similar parallels from New Testament era church structures and strategies to our own. This should give us pause, as the record shows that the NT's balanced, body-life/family-life oriented systems were robust enough to thrive and grow explosively, even under the pressure of periodic persecution. And, persecution was and is only to be expected in a context where the powerful are increasingly hostile to Christ.

Indeed, Jesus, speaking of the end of the age, warns: "Watch out that no one deceives you . . . . you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." [Matt. 24:4, 9 - 14.]

Whether we are facing the end of the age in our time, or simply the decline and fall of Western Culture in its present form, the NT example and Jesus' warning are all too pertinent. Building-centred structures are by that fact hostage to the fate of the facilities and the meetings they accomodate. Unbalanced -- and therefore unbiblically passive -- large group structures, typically with tiny cores of high profile leaders, are easily manipulated or scattered by the simple tactic of targetting the leaders, as was attempted by the authorities in Jerusalem. [cf. Acts 4:1- 21, 5:12 - 42, 6:8 - 8:4.] The early church's opponents were probably amazed to see the result: the scattered *ordinary* members spearheaded the church's first missionary thrust!

This contrasts tellingly with the lack of involvement of today's average church member in evangelism, nurture, financing, prayer and such like, which we so often complain about; but such are simply the logical outcomes of the comfortable but unbalanced systems we have built. In the NT, though large groups and even crowds are important, they are not primary; the activity, commitment and initiative exerted by the ordinary member is thus a natural outcome: what we *do* is what we are being trained to do.

Could it be that the persecutions Jesus predicted will act as God's disruptive judgement, designed by him to drive us out of our comfort zones so we will then obediently get out into the matrix of the day to day world of the nations with the gospel? Certainly, as Acts 8:1 - 4 observes: "a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered . . . . Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

5.   Towards a Cell-Based, Strategy for Renewal

Balanced cell-based, body life-oriented structures are clearly better adapted for our present situation and future prospects than the predominant ones we just examined. And, the prospect that if we do not change by choice, our Lord may have to change us by force is particularly sobering. Change, obviously, must be a priority. But, how can we change?

Renewal starts with vision. As long as we remain satisfied with a superficial understanding of our Mandate, change will be a frustrating challenge. Therefore, we must first stress Paul's body of Christ-based, Christocentric Fulness Vision, and work out its implications for our structures, systems and strategies. Thus, we need to summarise a biblical and practical framework for renewal, tying the above elements together into a regional strategy for renewal.

First, we need to accept that we are the body of Christ, "the fulness of him who fills everything in every way," recognising that each disciple is called to significant areas of ministry "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ . . . . as each part does its work." Thus, the door to renewal swings open:

1.   **Unity:** Paul's intimate link between "unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God" and the maturation of the church is vital. The dynamics of sectarianism, as we saw above, must be exposed; and we must confess our own guilt, repent and be reconciled with our brothers who are also in the faith. In our present, far less than ideal, situation, this calls for personal contact and friendship across organisational lines. Let us admit and turn from our history of selfish divisiveness, envy and hostility, opening our minds to correction of our own errors and ungodly traditions [cf. Matt. 7:1 - 5]. Active and open cooperation, liasing and networking with other churches and/or parachurch groups (with an active policy to express unity institutionally by federating or uniting our various organisations) will also be important. Let us never forget that the credibility of the gospel itself is at stake!

2.   **Body:** Paul views each believer as being called to significant ministry in the church; often instead we split the church into "the Ministers" and "the ministered to," participants and audience, which undermines the intent of the doctrine of the church as the body of Christ. This is reinforced by the further error of equating buildings with "the house of God," in the teeth of NT teaching: "As you come to him, the living Stone -- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him -- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ," and "you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." [1 Pet. 2:4, 5; cf. 1 Cor. 3:1 - 17 and Eph. 2:19 - 22.]

 Clearly, the NT focusses on the people of God -- the church -- as the interdependent, synergistic members of the *Body of Christ*, God's house indwelt and empowered by his Spirit, and accordingly describes a network of mutually supporting believers who penetrate communities; typically meet for mutual nurture and worship as small groups in homes (and assemble in large groups as facilities permit, cf. Acts 2:46; 3:11, 5:12, 20, 42 vs. 8:3; 19:9; Rom 16:5; Philemon 2); are led locally by *ministry teams* -- presbyteries -- comprising teaching and ruling elders working with practical welfare-oriented deacons [Titus 1:5 - 2:15 & 1 Tim. 2:12 - 3:16, with Rom. 16:1 - 7, cf. Acts 2:37 - 47, 6:1 - 7, 13:1 - 5, and 20:17 - 35; cf. "Bishop," "Presbytery," "Deacon[ess]," "Ministry," "Church [Government]" in *The New Bible Dictionary*]; and whose outreach thrusts are largely based on the witnessing of the average church member, but also make use of trans-local *missionary teams* such as Paul's.

 Therefore, let us break out of the mentality of sitting in pews and passively receiving from the few "Ministers" within the four walls of "the House of God." Instead, let us follow the NT: penetrate and disciple our communities as the Spirit-energised and gifted body of Christ, coached and coordinated by teams of leaders given by Christ to the church for its maturation, as we work to fill "all things" with Christ.

Concretely, our thinking and practice need to move away from an overemphasis on the large group, balancing it with dyad (pair) and other small groups -- including families -- designed around the win, nurture, send cycle of discipleship, as we noted above. (We must also stress the critical need for each disciple to build his own relationship with God by cultivating the Quiet Time for devotional Bible study, prayer, self-evaluation and thoughtful application of godly insights to life.)

A small-group oriented scenario, based on NT examples, personal experience and observations, bearing in mind the work of modern Missiologists, could be:

❑ Ideally, a congregation should be planted by a missionary team, operating as a trans-local ministry group sent out by a base church and/or Missions Agency.

❑ Perhaps, host families and/or businesses, such as Lydia's or Aquilla and Priscilla's, may provide a natural base in the outreach community, or one or more enterprises may be initiated as both a means of support and as a context for community contacts, including the business and government elites.

❑ People in the community can be reached through natural links: family, friends, workplace; the street, mall, market or other places where people come together; institutions, homes and neighbourhoods, interests, and needs.

❑ Early inquirers, such as the woman at the well in Sychar, even if alienated, are members of the community with their own networks of contacts, and can become partners in outreach. [Cf. 1 Thess. 1:2 - 10, esp. 8.] . (Steve Skeete, of Street Gospel Ministries in Barbados, has proposed that the natural family links women have to men in their lives may be a key way to reach men in the Caribbean.)

❑ Home Bible studies and prayer circles almost suggest themselves for this, and provide a context for teaching the gospel "from house to house." (Missiologists, such as McGavran, advise that decisions to follow Christ may be in a "multiple-individual, mutually interdependent" context, and if backed up with adequate nurture, are often at least as effective as the more familiar western-style individual decisions.)

❑ Those who commit themselves to Christ can then be further trained in nurture cells, with the first baptisms preferably being of a mutually supportive group.

❑ As the number of cells grows, it would then be natural to assemble for worship, teaching and ministry in larger group meetings, on a regular basis. At this point, we have a functioning congregation.

❑ By this time, potential leaders should be emerging, and training/ministry teams can be formed, leading to the development of a presbytery, and opening the way for a new Missionary team to move on to the next planting. Such a team may well include

some of the leaders from the young church, especially if they may aid further contacts.

❑ Business initiatives; drama groups and other arts & culture initiatives; professional support circles for educators, nurses, journalists etc.; public policy, intercession and prophetic teams, and similar initiatives can also now begin to study and take the fulness agenda to the wider community.

❑ In the long term, a network of relationships, training and consultancy support, mutual accountability, conferences etc. can give expression to wider organisational structures.

Thus, a small group strategy seems feasible. Greg Livingstone's *Planting Churches in Muslim Cities: a Team Approach*, [Baker, 1994] has many useful further details. The strategy is also so flexible that it may easily be adapted to specific situations, such as a Campus Fellowship network. Renewal contexts, such as those faced by the church in our region, though, will require a more detailed focus on groups in body life, gifts and training issues and networks.

3.   **Small Groups, Unity and Body Life:** First, the fact that Jesus chose *twelve* potential leaders for training by "be[ing] with him . . . that he might send them out" [Mark 3:14] as apostles is significant: a dozen or so members is a reasonable upper limit for *strong* small group dynamics, as the number of pair interactions in a group is $1/2[n].[n - 1]$, an n-square law; it yields 78 for Jesus and the twelve. As numbers rise to about 30 - 40, interaction breaks down, informal circles or "cliques" tend to form, and the leadership core is forced to increasingly rely on broadcasting information to the group as a whole. (By the way, it is no accident that this size range is the first church growth "sticking point.")

Since conflicts are inevitable in any group, such cliques rapidly become factions, and conflict resolution strategies have to be based on negotiation with their leaders. Unfortunately, if these informal leaders have risen by force of personality, talent and ambition, rather than biblical wisdom, service and maturity, positive conflict resolution may be impossible. [Cf. James 3:1 - 4:12 (NIV); 1 Tim. 3:1 - 12 (nb. *gunaikas* (11), lit. "women," may well mean "deaconesses," cf. Rom. 16:1, marg., *The New Bible Dictionary*, and Banks, pp. 118 ff.); 2 Tim 2:20 - 26.] The implications for disintegration hardly require elaboration. Clearly, church leaders should harness the small group dynamic, but how?

Families logically come first -- right from Creation -- as God's designated primary small group context for life: committed heterosexual unions, the walled gardens within which conception, birth, nurture, education, training, and wider community involvement naturally spring forth. [cf. Gen. 18: 18, 19; Prov. 1:1 - 9; Eph. 4:17 - 6:9, esp. 5:15 - 6:4.] (It is telling to note in passing that antichristian agendas typically target the family, its members and their sexuality: if they alienate us from godly, family- and church- based community structures, as atomised individuals we will be far more vulnerable to artful deceit, manipulation and tyranny. [cf. Eph 4:14.])

So, in a congregation -- though other foci, such as outreach or missions project teams, or drama groups, etc. can be quite effective -- it is natural to start with family life: courtship, covenant, parenting, nurturing, leadership, discipline and conflict management. Given Caribbean culture, it will also be vital to comfort the pains of childhood and set a healthy framework for sexual, social, intellectual and spiritual maturity. As we thus focus on the family, we will tap what are perhaps the strongest wellsprings of human motivation, address the key issues in discipleship, and lay an excellent foundation for service in outreach, nurture and ministry groups.

This family focus thus builds bridges to emerging leaders in the church, trains them in biblical principles for leadership and service, and lays a good foundation for selection, promotion and handling conflict or crisis. (Indeed, it is no accident that Paul often views the church as God's family, habitually using terms such as "son," "father," "brother," "sister" and "mother." Cf. Mark 10:28 - 31 and Malachi 2:14 - 16 & 4:5, 6.) Thus, when we go on to set up special outreach, nurture and ministry groups designed to address needs and service opportunities in the church and community, leadership selection, training and coordination will be far easier; the cooperative, servantly attitudes that lead to positive conflict management will have been nurtured and integrated into habitual life and thought patterns. Could this be part of the reason that Paul insists that church leaders should be good family leaders? [Cf. 1 Tim. 3:1 - 13, Titus 1:5 - 16.]

Once these issues have been effectively addressed, small *outreach groups* (eg. office prayer groups, evangelistic Bible study and discussion groups), *nurture-focussed cells* (eg. cottage/house groups, campus cell groups), and *ministry teams* (eg. music groups, Dorcas circles, committees, presbyteries [cf. *The New Bible Dictionary*], Christian professional partnerships, missionary teams) will greatly multiply opportunities for -- and involvement in -- outreach, nurture, training and effective ministry. We must also foster the effective coordination of the various small groups by integrating them into larger scale church structures, such as we noted above.

Resistance to small-group involvement may occur, especially in contexts where people are in pain, fear authority or accountability, and tend to mistrust and manipulate those they relate to. Typically, this reflects deeply dysfunctional family experiences, as is so common in the Caribbean, underscoring the family focus above. Common expressions of resistance or fear include "forgetting" to come to "agreed-to" meetings, reluctance to open up and express oneself, passivity as opposed to spontaneity [which makes the meeting feel "dead"], or even direct clashes and challenges to leaders.

In such cases, the example set by small group leaders is critical: we must model trust and trustworthiness, openness and mutual accountability, commitment, caring, integrity, and humility. Another key strategy is to use plurality of leadership in cells, so that there is mutual support, balancing of gifts and perspectives, variety, and opportunity for leadership development. In mixed-sex contexts, such a leadership core should be mixed as well.

At an organisational level, short-term ministry projects — such as evangelistic Bible Studies, a dramatic production, a concert, etc. — may be used to introduce the actual use of small groups/teams, reducing resistance due to the value of the project in view and the

subordinate character of the group structure being used. Then, once there is a framework of positive experience, teaching and training can extend initial briefings and orientation exercises, helping to build a consensus for structural renewal. It would then be natural to integrate the small group concepts and structures into the work of the wider organisation, changing structures that hinder body life as we go.

Of course, this will not eliminate conflict, but it should minimise it and give focus to why there is a need for change towards body life and ministry oriented structures. A good foundation in inductive Bible study techniques will also be helpful, as will the careful preparation for body life and service pointed out above. Exposure to the concept that each disciple is called to ministry in the church and community, and is gifted by — and accountable to — God for such ministry is a critical issue.

4. **Gifts and (Small Group) Ministry:** Unfortunately, much controversy has swirled around the NT teaching on spiritual gifts, often obscuring their critical role in the proper functioning of the church as the body of Christ, especially in small groups. It is therefore necessary to specifically address this topic.

Paul strikes a complex balance in 1 Cor. 12 - 14: "about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant . . . . to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good . . . All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines . . . . God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. . . . you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first . . . apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. . . eagerly desire the greater gifts. . . Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. . . . Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. . . . When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. . . . be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

Gifts, then, are diverse manifestations of the Spirit, some of which are given to each disciple as tools to help him in his specific service in evangelism and building up the body of Christ, towards filling "all things." (So broad and diverse is the range listed in the NT, from celibacy [1 Cor. 7:7], leadership, showing mercy and giving [Rom. 12:8]; to healing and miraculous powers [1 Cor. 12:9, 10; cf. Acts 8:4 - 8], that it is evident that the listings are illustrative rather than exhaustive.) As we work together to build up the body, it is strengthened and united as it matures in the image of Christ. By contrast, love is a "way," a life-transforming passion produced in us by the Spirit as he sanctifies us in Christ. [Cf. Rom. 5:1 - 8, & Acts 24: 14, 22.] It is therefore no surprise to see that gifts manifested without love are futile [13:1 - 7]; that gifts are to be exercised with wisdom, discipline, discernment and restraint; and that the most controversial, tongues, is neither universal nor to be used indiscriminately, nor to be forbidden.   [See 12:30 - 13:1, nb. 14:5; 14:1 - 28 (esp. 12 - 19), & 39 - 40.]

As tools for building up the church, gifts will have fulfilled their purpose "when perfection comes . . . Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." [13:10, 12; cf. 1 John 3:1 - 3.] "Then," biblically, historically and logically -- see the record, from Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* [Bk. II Ch. 32.4, V Ch. 6.1] to Augustine's *City of God* [Bk.XXII, Ch. 8], and Bede's *History of the English Church and People* [cf. Contents, Penguin Ed]. -- seems to be best understood as denoting the Parousia. [cf. 1 John 2:28 - 3:3.]

In our teaching, training and working, the call to serve Christ lovingly as a member of the body must come first. This call speaks into each sphere of life: in family, church, community and world. Gifts are manifested as we serve Christ (often so quietly that they may not be explicitly recognised), working as a supernatural inspiration or empowering that transforms the quality of our loving service beyond merely human skill, wisdom, dedication or good intentions. [Cf. 2 Sam. 23:1 - 4, in context.]

Sometimes, the manifestations appear without explicit request. At other times, they are imparted in response to the laying on of hands with prophetic guidance. Paul encourages disciples to "eagerly desire" (thus, pray for) specific gifts, especially prophecy; and, judging by Paul's reminder to "fan into flame the gift," they may require regular practice to develop fully. [Acts 10:44 - 46, 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6.]

A balanced focus on gifts, then, would be to desire appropriate gifts in light of ministry (service) needs and one's calling, reaching out in prayer and the faith that "every good and perfect gift is from above" [Jas. 1:17, cf. Luke 11:5 - 13 & 1 John 5:14 - 15], then taking the risk of acting in that faith [Rom. 12:6 & Heb. 11:6], in the expectation that a gracious God desires to work through us to bless his people and fill the world with Christ.

Thus, one's specific call to serve in the various spheres and stages of life leads to a moving out in service, asking and expecting that God will manifest his power and wisdom in one's ministry, transcending merely human energy and insight. In turn, since calling, painful experiences [2 Cor. 1:3, 4] and gifting are Divine initiatives [1 Cor. 12:11], and are clearly unique to the individual [Eph. 4:16], our church and parachurch organisation, roles/offices, plans and other structures must be biblically based, highly participative, and flexible enough to "not put out the Spirit's fire," while allowing us to "[t]est everything," "[h]old on to the good" and "[a]void every kind of evil." [1 Thess. 5:19, 21, 22.]

Small groups seem to provide the best opportunities for this to happen [cf. 1 Cor. 14:26], which underscores their value in church renewal.

5. **Training Issues:** Training, especially of small group and ministry team leaders, is a critical input for successful discipling: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student [KJV: disciple] is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." [Luke 6:39, 40.]

The power of example drives the training dynamic, shaping **k**nowledge, **c**ommitments, **a**ttitudes, **s**kills and **h**abits (K-CASH) along a learning experience spiral, for good or -- as Jesus pointed out -- ill. Such spirals should start with the student where he or she is [including preferred learning and cognitive styles], visiting and revisiting learning experiences, facts, concepts, principles, problems, issues, applications, etc.; on each loop, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are reinforced, expanded and linked into a growing network until the student is "fully equipped." [cf. 2 Tim. 3:14 - 17.]

Content is critical. In the *win* phase of the discipling cycle, the truth of the gospel and how to respond to it by receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour are the central issues. In the *nurture* phase, first the consolidation of commitment and then basic service and leadership should be emphasised -- for *all* Christians, with a small group/team focus. [Cf. Heb. 5:11, 12 & 2 Tim. 2:2.] As disciples begin to grow in spirituality and service, the question of calling and *sending* out in service in family, church and community naturally leads to a lifetime focus on general leadership and specific areas of service, ranging from family life, church auxiliary and artform-based team ministry to serving in business, education, the professions and prophetic/intercessory involvement in the public policy/political arena, including serving in missionary teams or other full time Christian service. In particular, major intellectual, ethical, apologetics, media and public policy issues must be systematically and vigorously tackled, to multiply the effectiveness of disciples in the battle to fill the culture with Christ.

6.   **Regional Training Network/ "The School Without Walls":** The proposed renewal strategy requires systematic, integrated training in discipleship for the whole church, with a special emphasis on the small group dynamic. This is only to be expected, as our Mandate is to "disciple the nations . . . teaching them to obey [Christ]." Unfortunately, training is precisely the weakest single area of the Church's ministry in the Caribbean.

To remedy this, I propose the gradual formation of a regional training network integrating development and consultancy teams, churches, parachurch ministries, people in small discipleship-oriented groups, and support resources. The teams would first develop an overall framework and pilot training modules and resources for the win-nurture-send discipleship phases, including curriculum development strategies and standards. These would then be tested, upgraded, standardised and diffused across the region. As a reasonable estimate, this would take several years of effort and a significant, but not unreasonable, quantum of resources.

Then, over time, systematically targetting age- and life- stage groups, cultures and languages, we could extend the system. Thus, gradually, we would develop a "School Without Walls" discipling network, first across our region, then perhaps globally [with the aid of the Internet], especially in the two-thirds world.

The power and cost-effectiveness of modern microelectronics, microcomputers and communications networks are vital to this process. Powerful print, audio- and video-tape, and CD-ROM/multimedia resources are now relatively inexpensive to develop, especially if voluntarism and sharing philosophies -- perhaps, adapting the shareware software marketing strategy -- dominate the ethos. The hosting of a website and the use of fax and E-mail facilities would, very rapidly, tap the global potential of the strategy:

nor should we neglect the capability to do radio and television on the Internet (though we should also be aware of the potential for hostile surveillance).

6.   Concluding Remarks

The fulness view of our discipling Mandate, as drawn from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, outlines an effective biblical integrated operational strategy for the church's mission in the Caribbean, and world.

Our point of departure is the insight that the church "is [Christ's] body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way." Indeed, Jesus came, descending, serving, dying for our sins, rising and ascending "higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe." Accordingly, he has given us leaders -- apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . . attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ. . . . as each part does its work." Thus, Christ, working through the church, is an inexorably rising tide in history, overwhelming an increasingly desperate satanic chaos. Sadly, this picture too often must rebuke present praxis, which is Theatre-like -- performers, stage and audience, suffers from our history of divisiveness and isolation from positively impacting "real-world" culture, and tends to slip into Apocalyptic speculation, fatalism and escapism. Therefore there is significant need for repentance, reconciliation and renewal as we seek to obey our Lord and Saviour.

Operationally, small outreach, nurture and ministry groups, ideally starting with the family (the paradigm), will facilitate mobilisation, training and coordination as we seek to win, nurture and send out effective disciples to fill the world with Christ. Such groups work best when they are balanced by being integrated into larger scale church networks, in a context emphasising the unity of the church and repenting from our all too pervasive sectarian betrayal of the gospel. Given the lack of systematic, biblical, non-abusive discipleship training systems and networks, a need for training development and consultancy teams is recognised, as is the power of modern technology to accelerate and amplify our efforts, though these technologies also heighten the threat of hostile surveillance.

 Thus, the Fulness Vision leads to a powerful biblical integrated strategy for renewing the church and obeying our mandate to disciple the nations.   May we, by God's grace, receive wisdom and strength to fulfil it.

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