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TOWARDS A NON-ASSIMILATIVE INTEGRATION OF FULLER'S THREE SCHOOLS

by Ralph D. Winter

Dear Abby,

"Happy in San Angelo" praised her psychiatrist for curing her of a depression with hormones. The psychiatrist who even considers a physical cause for an emotional problem instead of blaming it on "mother" is a rare bird apparently found only in Texas. Too bad more of the same aren't around. 

(L.A. Times, Sunday, Jan. 16, 1972) "Amazed in Minneapolis"

QUACKERY VS INTEGRATION

Apparently the patient is pleased when a professional can acknowledge that the problem (and the cure) may lie in someone else's field of specialty. Perhaps many psychiatrists went to medical school before they talked about estrogen replacement therapy. Perhaps estrogens are a flash in the pan. But the fact remains that the patient is not well-served by narrow specialists whose own area of expertise is not integrated to closely related healing arts.

The woman of Mark 5 had used up all of her substance with practitioners who did not know or acknowledge the limitations of their skills. So today we recognize a subtle quackery wherever therapists of any stripe promote their own kind of curing techniques for every problem. Examples may range widely. The man who cures colds by bone manipulation. The Christian Science practitioner who rejects the use of polio vaccine. The surgeon whose only approach to an ulcer is an operation. The psychologist who never suggests to a patient that repentance and faith may be the problem. The pastor whose one-stringed instrument plucks out his only refrain: "Don't worry about your feelings, it's faith that counts." Or the plasterer for whom all walls of all houses ought to be plaster.

These are not examples of fakery so much as quackery. All of these people have presumably some legitimate areas of speciality. None is a quack because he lacks the other's skills. They are quacks insofar as they are not able or willing to be effectively aware of their own limitations. This can be a minimum definition of integration. According to this, specialists in closely related healing arts can achieve a type of integration by rising above a narrow quackery and acknowledging related skills they do not possess.

But the Schools of Theology and Psychology represent more than patient-directed healing arts. Man seems to have some kind of a need to philosophize, theologize, systematize his knowledge. The Islamic Mullah, the Communist cell leader, the Animist shaman, the Scofieldian dispensationalist, the Manson Family, all possess and employ as one of their most influential tools a powerful, purely intellectual, structured philosophy of "God and the world" that resolves into apparent and pleasing harmony a very wide variety of component spheres of knowledge. While these examples may not rank with the work of Augustine, Maimonides, Aquinas, Calvin or even Tillich, they do indicate the ever-present needs of the cognitive aspect of man. Their aspect certainly occupies the attention of both schools—all three schools—however active they may be in the therapeutic dimension.

PURE VS APPLIED FIELDS

Academic fields in the sciences are somewhat defined along lines of pure and applied science. There is the pure chemist and the chemical engineer, the physicist and the mechanical engineer. In the same sense there is the theologian
and the pastor. In no case can the applied field get along without the pure field being well respected and understood. Here is a second kind of necessary integration—between Jewett and Munger, between Tweedy and Sylling; it is the integration of pure and applied. It would be a mistake to assume that the School of Theology is pure and the School of Psychology is applied. Both schools try and must try to hold in tension the pure and the applied, the conceptual framework and the utilization of that knowledge. The one feeds the other. The theorist does not merely arrange and rearrange the elements of a pre-existing complete knowledge. He must stay close to the practitioner who as often as not turns up new insights which the theorist then must incorporate into his systematic structure. Theologians sally forth to produce a "theology of ecology" or a "theology of money" as the need arises, and thus they extend the explicit framework of their systematic structure. If the theoreticians fall behind, the practitioners may "go empirical" and abandon them or create a new field of structured thought that will compete with or complement the former. Thus, schools of theology are born and reborn, and psychology sprouts new sub-fields; experimental psychology, physiological psychology, developmental psychology, educational psychology, clinical psychology, social psychology, etc. This is also the result of the practitioners falling behind the theoreticians, especially when the theoreticians get out of their arm chairs and are active in experimental work.

We have said that this type of necessary integration between pure and applied areas of activity—being internal to the two Schools we are talking about—is to be distinguished from the kind of integration that is needed between the two schools. But there is a relationship. I may very reluctantly suggest that had theologians stayed close enough to their pastor practitioners, the secular psychologists might not have gathered so much momentum. And, had Presbyterian theologians come out a little sooner with their now famous document on the work of the Holy Spirit, a great deal of contemporary soul searching, confusion and anguish, not to speak of church splits might have been avoided. Indeed, it is infamous that that distinguished report on the Holy Spirit resulted only when a church body badgered its theologians into surmounting the boundaries arbitrarily defined years before as the "Reformed Doctrine of the Holy Spirit." It was a Princeton theologian, Otto Piper who years ago did strategic work in the area of a theology of sex, but again it took the formal action of a church body to push a significant segment of the church's theologians into producing even a limp report in an arena which for some years had been lay dominated and beyond the traditional theological framework.

THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY—THE CONCEPTUAL, "PURE" LEVEL

The question of whether or not theology can be or should be expanded to include psychology arises at this point. Ever since Abelard entitled his general treatise Christian Theology, the word theology has moved beyond what is now called theology proper to include a theocentric systematization of knowledge about many areas and entities other than the nature of God. Does a reverent, systematic, determinedly theocentric study of the current problems of ecology represent a legitimate area of theology? Or is Jack Rogers's paper on the "Theology of Ecology" a case of tongue-in-cheek theology? Granted that the secular field of psychology is forever separated from theology institutionally—as separate as the secular field of philosophy—is what theologians call anthropology necessarily distinct from a theology of the psyche? Can we have theological anthropology but not theological psychology or theological sociology?
TOWARDS A NON-ASSIMILATIVE INTEGRATION OF FULLER'S THREE SCHOOLS (cont'd)

I would propose for discussion (see figure) that the ideal total of systematizable knowledge about God and His creation be represented by a square and that the present, traditional area of theology be a large shaded region within it, and that the conceptual ground of the School of Psychology is inevitably within the same square. The entire square is constituted by natural and special revelation. And it is illumined in the very process of man's attempts to describe the surface of reality with a conceptual scaffolding. The same applies to the behavioral science aspect of the School of World Mission. This does not mean that Fuller must begin to reach out into the whole square and set up courses in chemistry and physics and biology, but it does imply that theologians must contemplate with Christian eyes (following Emile Caillet) even the latest spadework of the physical anthropologist. Harry Rimmer's "theological" crusades in this area are not good enough. And the need here is not just a case of oiling a squeaking wheel. These are proper areas of theology not of theology proper. It is not proper that the "satellite" schools would be writing theology without knowing it (or without the School of Theology knowing it) any more than it would be proper for them to try to write satellite theology without knowing theology proper and being properly Biblical and theocentric in their efforts.

THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY—THE APPLIED LEVEL

Thus on the level of pure, conceptual effort I suggest that integration is possible and desirable. So also I believe that the applied aspects of the three schools must also be integrated if not assimilated. Both the School of Theology and the School of Psychology, in their practical departments (undergirded, informed and informing their "pure" departments) are operating for the redemption of people, mainly as individuals. To use caricature ever so slightly, the theologians save people by rearranging their thinking while the psychologists save people by rearranging their feelings, but they both typically focus on individuals. Psychologists only recently have begun widely to deal with whole families or still larger groups. Ministers say they take families into church, but they almost take families apart since their church substructure rarely if ever allows the families to be together, and precious little attention is given to the Christian home. This is where Missions comes in. For some reason our particular school of Missions talks about saving whole groups. McGavran, caricatured, does not bother with individuals whose hands are raised, who "go forward," who sign cards, etc. He refuses to count them unless and until they join a (permanent) group.

Oh, but psychologists use groups—use is the right word. Group therapy of individuals, it is, not the therapy of permanent groups. I'm afraid that churches use groups in much the same way. All too often the perspective of the Schools of Theology and Psychology is to be concerned merely with the mental and spiritual sickness of individuals. The School of Missions is much more concerned with the sickness and health of groups (called churches?). In Missions we are primarily concerned with the creation of redeeming structures; the establishment of permanent
TOWARDS A NON-ASSIMILATIVE INTEGRATION OF FULLER'S THREE SCHOOLS (cont'd)

healing fellowships is the thing, and is regarded as the best approach even to the healing of individuals.

Thus as a parting shot: from our side of the street we see both the Theology and Psychology schools needing to become integrated (conceptually and in applied concerns) in regard to the molecules (not just atoms) of mankind. Psychologists are groping in this direction in their sub-field of Social Psychology. Theologians are groping in this direction at a snail's pace in what they call ecclesiology (while their pastor-practitioners are moving with express train speed in the whole area of "relational Christianity"). Even so, our seminary community is not really a community and I am afraid we do not have a clear idea of what it would be if it were.

All the King's horses and all the King's men have thus far been unable to put Humpty Dumpty (the seminary) together. Is this because together is not yet clearly part of either the conceptual or applied framework of either of the two schools? From my perspective, the absence of effective, functioning Christian community here at Fuller, and an effective internal ministry does indeed darken the possibilities of a more effective integration of the two (or three) schools. The reasons for this lack are not, I believe, spiritual, since we have a great deal of high commitment in our total community. I believe the obstacles are in great part a hide-bound ecclesiology that needs drastic updating. I believe that all three schools can explore this need more effectively than any one of them. I believe that God has put us, all of us, in this precise situation for such a time as this. No other institution in the world today has as great an opportunity and as grave a responsibility for this kind of crucial, timely breakthrough as does Fuller, in 1972.
We always spent Christmas with Grandfather. It was a two-hour drive from our home to his (Mother could make it in three), but from the time we moved away there was never any thought of spending Christmas anywhere else but with Grandfather. After we moved, Grandfather left our roomy house for a four-room flat with light, varnished floors in the Magnolia Apartments. It was a good place for him to live, a mere two blocks from "downtown" Tylertown, Mississippi. There was his pool hall and domino tables, and for a few years after he retired, his Chamber of Commerce office. A large magnolia tree stood near one corner of the Magnolia Apartments with large exposed roots and no grass to speak of. West Jordan Street ran in front of the apartments and when I was younger and too daring for my own good I crossed it with all the glory of Joshua, to the Tylertown John Deere office and weed-grown display lot. The few friends I had kept in Tylertown sometimes joined me for adventures astride the huge green dragons with big tined black haunches. But we never could get them to move.

Grandfather's apartment always looked the same. The living room, so-called only because it wasn't properly anything else, carried with it the very presence of Grandfather, because that was where he smoked his pipe. Along the darkest wall was a dark sofa above which hung a large and bright picture of the Grand Tetons reflected in a touched-up lake. In Grandfather's corner, across from the sofa, leaned a tall bookcase which held two particular treasures, at least to my judgment of twelve years' experience. One was a 1939 edition of Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia (only one world war, no jets), which for hours tolerated my probing. The other was a book bound in blue cloth with an impression of the AAF on the front and a full-page picture of General Arnold (white-haired, old, brave, courageous) on the flyleaf. Between its covers I learned how to fly; near the back I learned that brave men are usually praised posthumously. Grandfather's chair was beside the bookcase, covered in a heavy, grainy material with patterns meant to resemble needle point. A three-way floor lamp looked over his shoulder and revealed a table to his right that held his most treasured and oft-used possessions. On top was a radio (Hilton Cross and the Metropolitan Opera, live, on Saturday afternoons), an ashtray, matches, and Prince Albert pipe tobacco. Underneath the table there were always three things: the latest issue of Sports Afield, a well-thumbed edition of Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret and an equally well-used but inexpensive Bible. I don't remember in what order all these things found their proper place in his hands, but in the evening he read and during the day (when he was home) he listened to the radio; he always smoked.

The only windows in the living room faced Grandfather's chair. They were draped with a filmy white cloth (angels' robes perhaps?) which if anything intensified the light coming through them. The floor by the window was bare, with one notable exception: a round and narrow table which held Grandmother's vase. I didn't remember much about Grandmother, except that she was dead. All I really knew about her was that vase. It wasn't very pretty to my eyes (although I'm told that she was) and it did nothing. But everyone else revered it in a way that was never mentioned out loud. Apparently, it was her favorite.

The table itself seemed to grow out of the bottom of the vase; it had little substance of its own—a frail thing. The vase was made to caricature a tulip (or was it a rose), thus its base and stem were clear, knotted glass and the bowl was a deep, heavy burgundy. Around the bowl, a bit too large to look real, the maker (man or machine, I know not) had included the appropriate designs by which one could finally discover just what it resembled. The vase and table were in a precarious spot, so near the windows and those billowing curtains, but both had been around as long as I could remember.
In that, my thirteenth Christmas, we were as happy as usual; Grandfather had done nothing really adventurous which mother could label "folly for a man your age" so they didn't argue. We arrived in Tylertown only a day or so before Christmas, so Grandfather and I could not hike in the woods until after the Holiday. I was possessed of the same elegant expectations Christmas always bore me. I knew that They were capable of momentous plans behind my back, and so I hoped for the very best, I knew not what. However, the night before Christmas, all was almost lost: I Sinned. That sent me crashing to my knees, begging God "just this once" to lift the 24-hour curse, which He had long before revealed to me as my peculiar penalty for Sinning. I didn't sleep well that night, but then I never slept well on the night before Christmas.

Christmas morning I was led blindfolded into the living room to be surprised at the only unwrapped present, mine. It was a Super-K Seamless basketball, and it was the best I had dreamed of. The delay since it had been purchased had left it slightly deflated, so we used the needle that came with it and restored its shape. All that morning I stared at my new basketball and dreamed again, great dreams. After lunch, we went our various ways, leaving me in the living room to stare while Grandfather busied himself in the kitchen. The basketball was round and tight and to my mind serving no purpose while languishing in its box. One doesn't bounce a basketball on the wooden floor of an upstairs apartment, therefore I had to content myself with simply handling. But the ball would not be quiet. Rolling it on the fingertips led soon to passing it from one hand to the other. More elaborate tricks followed until it was spinning at the tip of one finger held above my head. But the most audacious experiment was yet to come. I let the ball roll from the tip of my finger down my arm, across the back of my quickly stooped shoulders and down the opposite arm, where my agile fingers caught it and set it to spinning again. The sporting world looked through my admiring eyes and I acknowledged my own applause. It had to be done again, this time in the other direction. The Christmas present rolled smoothly down past my wrist and elbow, where it caught the hump in my shoulder and I ducked to avoid having it catch me in the ear. It missed my ear, in fact it missed my head altogether and headed off on its own merry way, straight towards the window. On just one bounce, the Super-K Seamless basketball clipped the frail wooden table; Grandmother's vase was suspended with no support for the briefest instant before it hit the floor. The noise of its impact was not loud but I knew that it had been just loud enough. When it broke, it didn't scatter magnificently; it more nearly collapsed in a small heap at the very spot it fell, as if Grandmother herself had swooned and sunk there in a pile of loose robes.

Grandfather was beside me, but he was unable to move for a moment. He had never been quite so quiet as he was then. I was never scolded, or for that matter, hardly spoke to at all in the next few minutes. When he spoke he was still quiet although noticeably restricted, as he asked me to leave the room. Things could have been much worse, I thought while in another room, and for a while I was relieved. I don't remember the incident ever being mentioned again. Grandmother was indeed a beautiful woman. Grandfather told us about meeting her; she was a nurse and he had just recovered consciousness after an operation. The first person he saw was Grandmother and he always said that then he was sure that he had died and gone to heaven and that she was an angel. Her children are her likenesses as well and old pictures of Grandmother show her as the striking woman I imagined her to be. When I was much younger, I remember that Grandmother sat in our wicker rocking chair, held me in her arms and fed me my hot oatmeal for breakfast.
THE ODEN LECTURES: SOME IMPRESSIONS  
by Gary Reece

It is hard to assay one's feelings regarding an experience, especially when that experience is complex and laden with so many images that overlap each other. I may be confessing to my own incipient schizophrenia when I say this, but, I must say that I experienced the Oden lectures at two levels. The first level was going on in my own cognitive structures as he talked. I heard him say words and use complex phraseology to express even more abstract ideas which referred to even more abstract abstractions. The other level was what was going on in my feeling states as he talked about things.

First, I will give the "gut" level impression. I was disappointed and frustrated with the lectures, for I had rather high expectations due to previous exposure to Dr. Oden's books. I suppose I had rather simplistically expected to meet the epitome of the one who does the integration of Theology and Psychology. Like the Tower of Babel, the Oden lectures didn't quite reach what they had hoped to. The end for me was confusion and disappointment, as well as a lot of frustration. I felt that Dr. Oden used a lot of slick verbiage for which there was in the final analysis no exact referent. In my view the question and answer sessions ended in a lot of equivocation and tangential discussion. So many questions, and so few answers.

Secondly, I had many areas of disagreement with Dr. Oden. Let me explain what these were.

Dr. Oden cautioned the listener to not be guilty of comparing good models with bad. In my view, he proceeded in the following paragraphs to do just that. Having knocked the Medical Model of psychology into a cocked hat, he proceeded to offer a solution which smacked of some sort of idealized romanticism right out of a schoolboy's fantasy about what the early days of pietism must have been really like. He did admit, however, that (tongue in cheek) there were some deteriorated forms of pietism about.

In the first place, the medical model, though influential, is not the only viable model in psychology, and in fact, is gradually losing its influence. As an alternative to the medical model with its emphasis upon professionalism, dogmatism and rigid delivery systems, he proposed as a solution the concept of Laicization. I'm not sure just what exactly this is all about, but it sounded like ordinary people were to some-how go about the work that professionals had previously been doing. He gave great emphasis to the therapeutic potential in each man, but failed to place this in polarity with the daemonic potential which also resides in us all. It is at this point that I would like to have had Dr. Oden devote a great deal of time and be more specific, because I think this is the crux of the whole discussion.

I agree with Eysenck and Szasz concerning their criticisms of Psychotherapy. I take seriously the concept that the delivery systems are often ineffectual. I guess at this point in the lectures I was expecting Dr. Oden to turn the same critical eye upon the Church and do the same job on it. It would be at this point he could then present his ideas and elicit the cooperation of both the Theologian and Psychologist to find a new model, and integrated mode.

As it was presented, Laicization was not an integrated model. It was in my view an alternative model to the bad medical model, which did not take into consideration the same distinct flaws in the pietistic model.

The idea of Laicization is germinal, and a great deal of experimentation and conceptualization need to be done in order to bring it to maturity. I think neither the medical nor the pietistic model are capable of providing the kind of climate in which to give it fruition. It is at this point that Theologians and Psychologists need to talk to each other.
Dr. Oden remained too abstract and high flown in his lectures. His ideas were rather obscure, lacking definition and content. His defense of them was less than convincing. When he needed to be dogmatic he was defensive, and when he needed to be fiery he was passive and Rogerian, and when his ideas needed clarification he obfuscated.

THE ODEN LECTURES: SOME IMPRESSIONS (cont'd)

I AM THE WOMAN IN THE ELEVATOR
by Anita Goo

The Social Concerns class on Women's Liberation has a half-dozen students signed up for credit and about sixty interested attendants, mostly student wives and a few curious males. It's a self-involving course; you can't help it, though you may never utter a word. When Bruce Dreon approached me about writing an article for "The Opinion," I asked him, "What about?" The expected answer came—something concerning my feelings about being a female student at Fuller Theological Seminary.

There was a parallel drawn in the Women's Liberation class between the Black movement and the Women's Liberation movement. An example was given: Because of the progress in the Black movement, a group of white men in an elevator would never dare to make uncomplimentary remarks or racist jokes about any Black person in the same elevator. However, these same men would not hesitate to talk about women in an uncomplimentary way, though a woman stood in their midst. Here at seminary, I am that woman in the elevator—a kind of minority minority. I sit with you in classes, worship with you in chapel, and study with you in the library. I share table fellowship in the dining hall. I hear what you say about your wives and girl-friends, and what you say to me. Sometimes I even get into meaningful dialogue with you—often on a feeling level, and I appreciate that. But sometimes, I feel like a mascot.

a. The female motive for coming to seminary is often suspect. She either comes to seminary because she wants to find a Christian husband or she has been called by God.

b. If she comes to find a husband, her motivation is wrong. If she has been called by God, she must have such high motivation, that she doesn't have the same, pressing physical needs and/or emotional needs as a man, and is able to remain celibate.

c. If she sits in class and talks too much, she is aggressive (almost man-like). If she remains quiet, she is submissive as she ought to be (but as expected, does not have the ability to contribute much).

d. If she does talk and speaks gibberish, she should be shut up anyway (gently, of course), but if she says anything relevant, she may be beginning to teach men and that might be against the will of God.

That phrase "will of God" can be a bludgeoning hammer, too. I was told (by fellow male students) that if women preach or teach men, they are out of divine order. A couple of my sister students said that probably it is God's will that in the church, men should lead. The only reason why women are called into the Lord's service is because men are not listening to the voice of the Lord, so he must call the women. It's sanctioned for God's women to teach other women, though, and children, too.

If I say cute and witty things or brighten up the place a lot, maybe it'll be all right to be here. I might even be a part of Jesus' family. But dear Lord, I don't want to be out of your will, and it's uncomfortable to be a Cause.
Modern theology has rediscovered the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. While this revival has resulted in a healthy emphasis upon man's complete dependence upon God, some theologians have felt that any use of methods in evangelism is a practical denial of this doctrine. The use of various methods of evangelism, they believe, can only result in the Arminianism of method seen in the evangelistic strategy of men such as Finney and D. L. Moody.

The objection against these techniques is that rather than following the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit, the men simply ask the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon their own humanly contrived methods of evangelism. The objectors point out that Finney and his followers did not recognize that "the Spirit blows where it wills" (John 3:8) and therefore man cannot manipulate the Spirit according to his own desire. The more biblical approach, they claim, is to simply preach the same gospel to all men in the same simple way, trusting that the Holy Spirit will put conviction into the weak words of men. After all, they say, God powerfully used the sermons of Jonathan Edwards to bring people to Christ even though he read through his sermons, hardly ever looking up at people.

However, it would seem that this objection to a well planned strategy of evangelism has some more striking parallels to the anti-mission movements of the nineteenth century. In America those whom William W. Sweet calls "hyper-Calvinistic Baptists" felt that "God in his sovereign power did not need any human means to bring his elect to repentance. The non-elect could not be saved, and all the preaching in the world would do them no good. If, on the other hand, they were of the elect nothing could prevent their being saved" (Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. I. The Baptists, p. 75). Even earlier, in Britain, where William Carey was preparing to go to India, an elderly minister told him, "Sit down, young man, when God is pleased, to convert the heathen He will do it without your aid, or mine."

Although people with this attitude are called "Calvinists," John Calvin held no such doctrine. He says, "When we exhort and preach to those endowed with ears they willingly obey, but in those who lack them is fulfilled what is written: 'Hearing, they hear not'" (Institutes, III, XXIII, 13). J. I. Packer is more explicit when he says, "we must realize...that when God sends us to evangelize, He sends us to act as vital links in the chain of His purpose for the salvation of His elect" (Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, p. 98). Indeed both of these statements are in agreement with the apostle Paul who says, "how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?" (Romans 10:14). In other words, then, evangelism is a means God uses to bring His elect to himself. God does not act in isolation.

While there are few today who would deny the necessity of evangelism for bringing men to Christ, those who object to undertaking a strategy of evangelism fall prey to an error similar to that of the anti-mission Baptists. Both the anti-mission Christians and today's "hyper-Calvinists" do not understand the importance of means in evangelism. The argument today is that strategy is a human conception and that it denies that the Spirit of God is able in himself to give power to the "foolishness of preaching?" (1 Cor. 1:21). Strategy is an attempt by man to perform the task which can only be done by God. They claim that when strategy is used, the work of the Holy Spirit is reduced to merely giving a stamp of approval upon that which man has already done.

As we have already seen, however, God uses means to bring to himself those whom he has sovereignly elected. These means include evangelistic strategy
as well as the evangelists themselves. Why is it not possible that he has purpose to use certain different kinds of strategy as means to his ultimate goal of election? Thus, God may ordain Billy Graham's method as an effective means of evangelism for a particular segment of American society; but he may ordain entirely different methods of evangelism for the street people of Hollywood.

Therefore, any strategy of evangelism must determine both where and how the Spirit is moving. This requires prayerful research into the culture and needs of the unevangelized people so that the evangelist may understand how the gospel might best reach those people.

Here lies the central distinction between God's guidance and man's genius. Proper evangelistic strategy must attempt to determine where the Spirit moves and which method God has ordained. Man's strategy attempts to bring the Spirit along and to get divine approval for what man has already done. This results in an emphasis upon the number of initial "decisions for Christ" (whether or not the Spirit is at work) rather than upon the number of persons vitally connected with the church.

However, such falsely based strategy can have no permanent results. The number of initial "decisions for Christ" is meaningless if the people making those decisions are not vitally united with the church. Only the Holy Spirit can bring man to Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Thus if men are permanently joined to the body of Christ then that is a possible indication that God has appointed the strategy which brought them into the church.

It is true that the Spirit moves where he wills. Good evangelistic strategy seeks to find out where and how the Holy Spirit moves, recognizing that strategy is a means which God, in his sovereignty, uses to bring men to himself.