

Editorial

A VITAL AND COHERENT THEOLOGY

The Moderator of the World Council of Churches in his address to the seventh assembly at Canberra in February 1991 acknowledged that the search for a vital and coherent theology for the World Council of Churches has not met with success.

Before evangelicals react with smugness, it must be noted that missiologists like Samuel Escobar, Rene Padilla and Kwame Bediako charge evangelical movements like the Lausanne Movement with a similar lack. Samuel Escobar contends that more pragmatic mission theologies dominate evangelical movements.

The International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT) is a fellowship that grew out of a need to develop a vital theology arising from the contexts of mission.

Evangelical Mission Theologians from Asia, Africa and Latin America who discovered common ground at the Consultation on World Evangelisation in Thailand in 1980 met for the first time in Bangkok in 1982. Their focus on Christology published in *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Eerdmans 1986 - available now from Box 70, Oxford) has been widely hailed as a significant contribution to developing a vital theology for mission, coming from the context of poverty, powerlessness and religious plurality.

THEOLOGY AND MISSION

The vitality of theology is in relation to its ability to renew the church in its life and mission. It reflects as well as shapes the mission of the church. Vital theologies come out of the context of mission. For example, in this issue Bishop David

Vital theologies come out of the context of mission

Gitari's creative reflection on the work of Cain comes out of his own involvement in relating the church to the task of nation-building in Kenya. He himself acknowledged that his own work was stimulated by interaction with the writings of Padilla and Escobar.

Important developments can be expected in the future in the theological reflection of Protestants in Latin America as they move from a theology of protest to a theology of participation.

This issue contains the declaration produced by the Fourth International Conference of INFEMIT held in Osijek, Yugoslavia in April 1991. 85 theologians and mission practitioners from 32 countries reflected on the theme of Freedom and Justice in Church - State relationships.

MISSION CONTEXTS

Certain emphases emerged. The collapse of bureaucratic socialism in Eastern Europe has led to a situation where in some countries there is strong antipathy to the use of the term "justice". How should Christians assist in the recovery of such a term? While Eastern Europe rushes to enjoy the fruit of freedom, how should Christians contribute to enable the development of freedom with justice? The papers of the conference struggle with the above.

How should Christians contribute to enable the development of freedom with justice?

QUESTIONS

The concerns of Christians in Islamic states were discussed. It was noted that while Islam promotes a religiously totalitarian society, there is room in Islamic tradition for freedom and justice for non-Islamic citizens, albeit with considerable limitations. The role of Christians world-wide in encouraging Islamizing societies to develop reciprocity in their relation to religious minorities among them was identified.

A key issue that emerged related to the Christian influence in desacralising state power. It was noted that political power has traditionally legitimised itself by developing a sacral dimension. The disarming of the powers by Jesus Christ on the cross is at the heart of the process

(continued on page 21)

