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*Articles and book reviews reflecting
global evangelical theology for the purpose
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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Editorial: Impacting the World

A robust call to care for the world around us as Christian disciples opens this issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology*. In this comprehensive article, Thomas Johnson (Czech Republic) shows how such a stance can be convincing in terms of Christian truth claims and also influential in global public discussion.

Drawing from different disciplines and by using a series of helpful models (with diagrams), Hannes Wiher (Switzerland), provides many insights about how a person's worldview is affected by the process of conversion to Christ, noting that the old worldview may remain active or be transformed progressively; whatever the case, the Christian's identity and behaviour will be impacted. This article offers a grid that will help readers understand Christian discipleship and promote good relations between people of different contexts.

The remaining articles were all presented originally as papers at the International Consultation for Theological Educators held in Nairobi, Kenya, 15-19 October 2012 and are used here by permission of the sponsors, International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE—www.icete-edu.org). The theme of the consultation, 'Rooted in the Word, Engaged in the World', was focused on the Cape Town Commitment (CTC) document resulting from the Lausanne Congress, 2010. Therefore, our first paper is the keynote address by Chris Wright (UK), which emphasises the ways in which the CTC bears on the task of theological education.

Then Enrique Fernández (Costa Rica), proposes 'an understanding of

the systems and strategies that can help theological institutions interact with the church and the world in relevant ways, with the goal of producing personal and structural transformation of cultural and social contexts.' The author is confident this approach will assist theological schools 'engage their culture and society' more effectively. Just how that could occur is the topic of the paper by Havilah Dharamraj (India) which vividly describes (with the aid of an illustration—originally in colour) how a new approach to the teaching of an Old Testament book transformed the understanding and ministries of the students involved.

In presenting a challenge about the fundamental aim of theological education rather than its methods or strategies, Myrto Theocharous (Greece) explains that the goal is to 'is to encourage, support and equip prophets'—those who will be able to identify and expose the 'pious talk', and 'hidden allegiances' by 're-reading' the biblical text so that our ears will be open 'to what the Spirit says'.

Finally for this issue and for this year, Carver T Yu (Honk Kong), speaking personally, challenges trends in theological education which, under the pressures of the secular and the academic worlds, turn it into a mere professional activity, or scholarship for its own sake. He advocates instead a confessional approach which sees theological education as an integral part of the mission of the church and one which aims to produce committed and informed disciples.

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

Faith and Reason Active in Love: The Ethics of Creation Care

Thomas K. Johnson

Keywords: *Environmentalism, Natural Law, technology, reason, physical laws, science, dualism, revelation, worldview, economy*

I Our Situation

On the one hand:

A 2012 World Health Organization (WHO) study found that 3.5 million people die early annually from indoor air pollution and 3.3 million from outdoor air pollution.¹

Many of these deaths occur in China and India.

Unsafe water causes 4 billion cases of diarrhoea each year, and results in 2.2 million deaths, mostly of children under five.²

LatinaLista—Earth Day 2013

should have been more than just a ‘celebration’ of the planet or even a further raising of awareness of the consequences of climate change. Earth Day 2013 should have served as the beginning of a panic attack among global communities that the future of the planet is not just extremely fragile but imminently life-altering for all inhabitants.³

On the other hand:

In 1968 Stanford professor Paul Ehrlich predicted ‘The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate.’⁴

1 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/09/air-pollution-deaths-green-energy_n_3045828.html. Accessed May 27, 2013.

2 http://www.unwater.org/wwd10/downloads/WWD2010_Facts_web.pdf. Accessed December 2, 2013.

3 <http://latinalista.com/2013/04/earth-day-2013-should-serve-as-the-beginning-of-an-environmental-panic-attack>. *LatinaLista* of April 22, 2013. Accessed May 27, 2013.

4 Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, (Ballantine Books, 1968), prologue, no page number.

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'The ban on DDT,' says Robert Gwadz of the National Institutes of Health, 'may have killed 20 million children.'⁵

And yet:

1. This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world: I rest me
in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
his hand the wonders wrought.
3. This is my Father's world. O let me
ne'er forget
that though the wrong seems oft so
strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world: why
should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens
ring! God reigns; let the earth be
glad!⁶

A serious discussion of environmental ethics has to face massive contradictions. Many millions, usually the poor, are dying annually as a result of air, water, and indoor pollution; the consequences invite comparisons with the Holocaust. On the other hand, the terrible predictions of 45 years ago, represented by Paul Ehrlich, were clearly false; there are not hundreds of millions starving to death each year.

At the same time, some have gone beyond angst into a self-confessed state of panic about the environment, often citing global warming; other thoughtful

people are divided, some seeing past efforts to protect the environment as quite effective, while others see much environmentalism as foolish naiveté, represented by the self-destructive ban on DDT. Some want new environmental ethics to protect humanity, while others say humanity is the problem and want to replace human-centred 'speciesism' with a 'Land Ethic' or an 'Eco-centric Ethic,' claiming previous Christian and philosophical ethics wreaked havoc because they were *too* interested in human well-being.

We must, however, be careful about what types of answers we expect to find in the Bible. The Bible does not address every hot topic. The Bible does not tell us what portion of climate change is caused by humans and what has other causes. The Bible does not tell us if the greater risk to human well-being is global warming or the onset of another ice age, which some predict. The Bible does not tell us how to reduce air pollution in the metropolises of the developing world, the cause of massive suffering. Nor does the Bible tell us the exact relation between local health risks and global environmental problems.

However, the Bible does give us an overall perspective on God, humanity, and the world, freeing us from religious distortions, some of which make environmentalism into a religion-substitute against a history of anti-environmental philosophy. Furthermore, attention to nuances in the Bible will help us develop a balanced, responsible environmentalism that can be applied, that contributes to moral discussion in a religiously mixed world, and that supports our presentation of the gospel in the global environmental discussion.

⁵ Michael Finkel, 'Malaria,' *National Geographic* (July 2007) <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/07/malaria/finkel-text>. Accessed May 27, 2013.

⁶ This famous hymn was written by Pastor Malbie D. Babcock in 1901.

Both for the sake of contributing to moral discussion in the public square and of supporting the global presentation of the Christian faith, we should emphasize the relation between faith and reason, both of which must be motivated by care for people and nature, which are both God's creation.

II Faith and the Unity of Divine and Human Creation Care

God's Word articulates a creational unity of God's natural physical laws, God's moral law, and God's continuing care for his creation, which provides the basis for human creation care, including loving our neighbours environmentally. In secular cultures people commonly embrace dualisms which separate natural science from ethics and the ethical treatment of people from care for nature.

A crucial step toward overcoming such dualisms, reconciling environmental science and ethics, is to recognize the unity and goodness of God's work in creation and providence. The 'natural law' is the complex unity of God's moral law given to all mankind with God's scientific law, by which he governs all of non-human nature, grounded in his creation and continuing care for his world (common grace and providence). This unity, taught in the Bible, unifies our environmental ethics.

God's law-giving activity in creation and his sustaining care fit together. God is both Creator and Sustainer of the world in its entirety, human and non-human (Ps 104; Heb 1:3; Col 1:17; Neh 9:6). The Old Testament describes natural physical laws and God's moral

laws for humanity in parallel; the two words used for 'decree' or 'ordinance' (Hebrew: *choq* and *cherah*) refer to both moral principles (Deut 4: 1-45; 5:1-31; 6:1,20; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:16; 2 Sam 22:23; Ps 18:23) and ordinances governing the non-human creation (Jer 5:24; 31: 35,36; 33:25; Job 28:26; 38:33).⁷ God's sustaining care forms the background for human moral responsibility (Ps. 89:9-15).

Helmuth Egelkraut describes this unity of scientific laws, moral commandments, and God's care for creation: 'This world, as a creation of God, has been given certain decrees which ensure its continuation.'⁸ Natural laws are God's laws for nature. Nature does not give the laws of nature to itself; its laws are not self-existing. Laws of *creation* or *creation* ordinances are the description of God's laws governing nature and humans.⁹ God's first group of commands to humanity, including care of creation (Gen 1:26-28; 2:15), are an organic part of God's natural law.

In Psalm 148:6 we read about the heavens: 'He set them in place forever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.' In Jeremiah 31:35-37 the creation ordinances are described as unchangeable decrees coming from God. According to Jeremiah 33:20-26, God made a 'covenant with the day'

⁷ Both terms are used parallel for the moral law in Deuteronomy 6:1, 2; in Jeremiah 31:35, 36 they are used for God's rule over nature.

⁸ Helmuth Egelkraut, 'Gott, der Schöpfer und Erhalter und sein Gebot,' 40 Jahre Evang. Missionsschule in Unterweissach: Freundesbrief Nr. 116 (Oct., 1988) 26-30, here 29.

⁹ This unity of the natural law governing humans and nature was a standard theme in Christianity in most of our history.

and with the night. Thus the 'fixed laws of heaven and earth' have been 'established' and are as certain as God's covenant with David.

Parallelism describing God's decrees in creation and his ordinances for humanity abound in the Psalms and the Prophets: 'He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow. He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel' (Ps 147:18-19). 'Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the Lord' (Jer. 8:7).

Other biblical terms describe the unity of God's relation to humankind and nature, which we mistakenly separate. Jesus 'rebuked' (Greek: *epitimaō*) the elements (Mk 4:39; Lk. 8:24), as well as the demons (Mt 17:18; Mk 1:25; 9:25; Lk 4:35; 9:42). In the Old Testament God 'rebuked' (Hebrew: *ga'ar*; 28 times) his enemies (Is 17:13), as well as the sea (Is 50:2; Nah 1:4; 2 Sam 22:16; Ps 18:16; 104:6-7; 106:9) and the 'pillars of the heavens' (Job 26:11).

We should understand this unity of God's law governing nature, God's moral law for humans, and God's care for creation in association with several additional theological principles. Some will be briefly summarized; others will be explained:

1. The unity of work ethics and environmentalism

There is an ultimate unity between God's continuing care for his creation and his mandate that humans become fruitful and work in his world. There is

not a conflict between Christian work ethics (leading to community and economic development) and Christian environmental ethics (leading to a cleaner and healthier world). The same God who created us with a mandate to work in his world has also commissioned us to care for his world. And as God cares for his creation by means of his decrees, we trust that he will sustain his world while we imitate him in his world.

Humankind was created for purposes pleasing to God. God made humankind in his image to be the ruler of the earth and gave him the responsibility of preserving and developing creation. This creation mandate is not added on to human nature as a task which is alien to what we are naturally or which people can avoid; it is an organic part of how God has made us. (This means that God's creation mandate forms the hidden theological assumption for creation care even when God is ignored.)

The Bible starts in the Garden and ends in the Eternal City, because the development of civilization is not only a human necessity related to human well-being; it is also God's plan for the ages. From our human perspective, civilization and the development of our environment comprise a sub-creation, applying God-given human creativity to God's original creation; from God's perspective, according to the Bible, civilization is an implementation of God's plan.

For this reason, we believe that technophobia, the fear of significant technological growth, cannot save our environment. Only if we apply the cumulative intelligence and research inquisitiveness expressed in technology resulting from a strong work ethic can

we be environmentally responsible. Christian ethics seems designed for this combination of environmental care and technological development.

Günther Rohrmoser summarized these two sides which must be emphasized simultaneously. Humanity needs a worldview that places the human race into a moral position of responsible superiority over nature. 'Humankind is not only to come to know that he is lord and possessor of nature, but also to know that he is not merely a part of nature. Rather, he is to experience that nature has been entrusted to him.' This is a role which 'corresponds to the statements made within Christianity's account of creation, which brings with it the theological potency to develop this position in order to solve the basic problems of our society. The creation mandate does not mean to dominate nature. Rather, it means to conduct culture-shaping activity and to develop and unleash the hidden possibilities.'¹⁰

The lordship humanity has over the earth must serve both humankind and the rest of creation, bringing creation to its intended goal; complementary biblical principles must be held together. In Genesis 2:15 humanity receives the dual mandate to 'work' the world and 'to take care of it,' always in light of God's purposes and human needs. Some have falsely separated using the creation from caring for the creation, but biblically they belong together: 'A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel' (Prov 12:10).

Sabbath rest applies to livestock for

their needs (Ex 20:10; Deut 5:14). The land receives a Sabbath rest to serve wild animals by producing food for them (Lev 25:7; Ex 23:10-11). Rules protected animals as well as human beings: 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain' (Deut 25:4). The angel's first criticism of Balaam was that he beat his donkey (Num. 22:32).

That humanity is to preserve the creation does not place human beings on the same level as the creation; it distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation. While the creation is to be preserved, the creation also serves humanity. In war, for instance, the trees providing food which belonged to the enemy were not to be cut down (Deut 20:19-20), for they expressly served to nourish people. A similar stipulation protected birds in Deuteronomy 22:6-7. That the earth, especially farmland, was to lie fallow every seventh year (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7) was a conspicuous rejection of exploiting the soil.

Humanity, acting as steward, has received the earth on loan from God and is responsible for its preservation. This is our Creator's work ethic for humanity, created in his image. Our care for and development of creation must reflect and image God's care for and development of his creation.

2. The unity of love of neighbour and environmental ethics

There is an ultimate unity between loving our neighbours and the biblical work/environmental ethic. As early as Leviticus 19:18, God instructed his people to 'love your neighbour as yourself' as a summary of the moral law. It

¹⁰ Günter Rohrmoser, *Landwirtschaft in der Ökologie und Kulturkrise* (Bietigheim, 1996), 130-131.

should be noted that the command to love people came after God's creation ordinances, thereby showing that the love command assumes God's creation ordinances to develop a civilization and care for creation. This addresses foundational questions in environmental ethics: Are economic development, love of neighbours, and care for creation compatible with each other?

In more detail: should we sacrifice economic and technical development to protect the environment? Should we prefer that a billion remain in primitive conditions so they do not cause pollution? Do the interests of the millions dying from pollution stand in conflict with the interests of the entire human race in reducing pollution? Will helping individuals suffering from the results of pollution help or hurt humanity and the ecosystem?

Answers to such philosophical questions are brought *to* the study of the environment, not learned *from* the study of the environment. Our answers to these questions are derived from the Bible. We believe there is compatibility among our God-given moral responsibilities to love our neighbours, to care for creation, and to develop civilization. Phrased differently, we believe that there is unity among an energetic Christian work ethic, creation care, and love of neighbours in need. That complex compatibility requires implementing all the creativity God has given us. It means we expect that loving the poor, whose poverty is linked with horrible pollution, can lead to a type of economic development that is both better for such people and better for creation.

3. Creation care in all the mandates

As described in the Bible, human life was given structures designed by God, each with distinct purposes and responsibilities, the 'mandates.' Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, 'The Bible knows of four such mandates: work, marriage, the state, the church.'¹¹ God's purpose that we care for the creation was built into humanity in a manner that precedes the distinction into the separate mandates. This means that creation care must be implemented in appropriate ways in all the mandates.

Caring for creation is not so much a responsibility for a particular mandate as it is a responsibility that has to be carried out in a distinct manner in each mandate. This means that a business (resulting from the work mandate) has different type of environmental responsibility than does a family (resulting from the marriage mandate). The state has a type of duty in relation to the environment (writing and enforcing reasonable laws) which is different from that of the church (articulating an ethics of creation care).

4. The unity of human and divine creation care

Human care for creation both already is and must become an image of God's care for his creation. It is a mistake to think either that God's care for his world makes our care unnecessary or that we can protect creation without God's direct involvement. Bonhoeffer drew attention to the difference be-

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethik*. (München, 1949), 70.

tween the creation of humankind and the creation of the rest of the universe. He interpreted Genesis 2:7 ('. . . the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being'):

Body and life are completely intertwined at this point. God breathes his spirit into the human body. And this spirit is life, making the human being alive. God creates other life through his word. He gives humanity something of his life, something of his own spirit. Human beings as such simply do not live without the spirit of God.¹²

Gustav Friedrich Oehler points out an additional aspect of the image of God: 'The form of humankind was to be so created that when God revealed himself, it could serve as a presentation of himself.'¹³ Rather than replacing or competing with God's creation care, it is the breath and Spirit of God within us that makes human creation care possible so that our care for creation assumes the direct activity of God caring for his world.

5. God's natural law for the nations

God's law was given both to promote well-being among the people of God and to be contributed from the people of God to the surrounding nations. In Deuteronomy 4:40 we read, 'Keep his

decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you.' Knowledge of God's moral/scientific law is clearly intended for human well-being, but this is not narrowly related to the people of God. The Old Testament gives hints that God's natural law communicated through his people could contribute to the lives of their neighbours. In Deuteronomy 4:6 the people were told, 'Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations.'

These hints form the background for Jesus' teaching his disciples, 'You are the light of the world' (Mt 5:14). Not only is the gospel to be communicated from believers to the rest of the human race; there is also moral/scientific wisdom and that can and should be communicated from the people of God to the wider world, which should contribute to the well-being of wider communities.¹⁴ If the exiles in Babylon were to 'seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile' (Jer 29:7), we should not do less.

6. Knowledge of God's law and modern science

This biblical viewpoint, that both the natural moral/scientific law and God's written law arise from the same creation-sustaining work of God, has contributed significantly to the development of modern science, especially

¹² Otto Dudzus (ed.), *Bonhoeffer Brevier* (München, 1963), 81-82, quoted in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Schöpfung und Fall: Eine theologische Auslegung von Gen 1-3* (München, 1958⁴).

¹³ Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*. (Stuttgart, 1891³), 227-228.

¹⁴ We are thinking here of what the Reformation called the civil or political use of God's law, which, like all the proper uses of God's law, is always distinct from the gospel while having a relation to the gospel.

in the very formative early modern era. This has been a crucial way in which Christianity has contributed to the well-being of many people.¹⁵ If the cultures shaped by the Bible had not believed in God's creation ordinances, scientists would never have searched in such an intensive manner for natural laws! Though telling the story at length is beyond our purposes, we rejoice that God contributed key ideas that led to the benefits of science partly through the central beliefs of Christians. The biblical view of the creation order has had huge and constructive consequences which must be developed for creation care.

This set of theological truths is foundational for our view of science and environmental ethics. There is an ultimate unity in God's care for creation between valid moral principles and the laws discovered by science; as prescribed in the Bible and seen in history, God has brought great benefits to the entire human race through principles, ideas, and values articulated among the people of God.

15 On the Middle Ages see Karl Knauf, 'Gott, Naturgesetz und Zahl: Schöpfungstheologische Wurzeln der abendländischen Naturwissenschaft in der Naturphilosophie Robert Grossetestes,' *Glauben und Denken: Jahrbuch der Karl-Heim-Gesellschaft* 6 (1993), 156-186. See also Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Crossway, 1994). Pearcey and Thaxton were influenced by Francis Schaeffer, who argued that the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 'rested upon what the Bible teaches.' *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, Vol. 5, p. 157. Schaeffer's interpretation of this history followed Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 1925.

We see an ultimate unity among God's creation decrees for his world, his moral laws governing human behaviour, and the well-being of our neighbours. We expect to find unity among loving our neighbours, treating God's world properly, a vigorous work ethic, and honest science.

III Christian Ethics in Dialogue with Environmentalism

Though modern environmentalism demonstrates the conflict with God that characterizes fallen humanity, the recognition of creation care as a moral duty by people of many faiths or no faith is based on God's unrecognized demand. Because God is continually communicating his moral demands (general revelation), even if God is denied, people commonly recognize moral responsibility.

The many intellectual attacks on the Christian faith coming from writers accusing Christianity of contributing to environmental problems must be seen within the context that people are in conflict with God while God continues to provide those people with everything that makes human life possible. God even provides some knowledge of right and wrong to those who deny him!¹⁶

This conflict-filled relation is described throughout the Bible. For ex-

16 A few examples of this attack on Christianity: Eugen Drewermann, *Der tödliche Fortschritt: Von der Zerstörung der Erde und des Menschen im Erbe des Christentums* (Freiburg, 1991); Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,' *Science* 155 (1967); and Carl Amery, *Das Ende der Vorsehung: Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums*. (Reinbek, 1980; reprint of 1974).

ample, in Romans 1, echoing Genesis 2, where humans were to name (from a position of responsibility over nature) and be accountable for the rest of creation, we see a reversed relation between humans and nature resulting from sin. This means that people create substitute gods to try to replace the Creator, but by this process they also reverse their own relation to the rest of creation, imaging something in creation to be an authority. This continues a related Old Testament theme, the prophets' battle against the nature gods Baal and Asherim, which was simultaneously a battle against the idolization and glorification of nature.¹⁷

Humanity loves the thought that we are not responsible for the environment but rather that the environment is responsible for us. Just as Adam pushed the guilt for the fall onto Eve and Eve pushed the guilt onto the snake (Gen 3:12-14), humanity, with ever new religious tricks, tries to avoid responsibility for the environment and for our neighbours.

1. Environmentalism as substitute religion

The modern environmental movement sometimes pursues nature idolatry to the point of abrogating the difference between humans and the rest of earthly creation. For example, the preamble of the 'Earth Charter,' issued by non-governmental organizations after the international conference on the environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, claims: 'We are the earth, the people,

plants, and animals, rains and oceans, breath of the forest and flow of the sea. We honour Earth as the home of all living things.'¹⁸

The creation is put in the place of the Creator, the earth and rain are personified and placed on an equal footing with human beings, and the earth is worshipped. It is no wonder that the environmental movement is criticized as a substitute religion with its own ethic and eschatology, melding the esoteric with valid environmental concerns.¹⁹ Without trust in God's sustaining grace, it is not surprising that unduly pessimistic scenarios are maintained while real improvements in the environmental situation go unmentioned.

Given the way in which, on an ultimate level, venerating earth involves reversals and denials known of moral/spiritual truth, it is not surprising that former environmental activists have criticized environmental organizations for justifying their existence by twisting facts. Religiously driven reversals of the human-to-nature relationship lead to deadly consequences which are often related to denying knowable truths. The problems in environmentalist organizations are not merely how particular environmental issues are described and addressed. The problems include the religious worldview/philosophy of life from which environmental problems are perceived and described.

¹⁷ See Georg Huntemann. *Vom Überlebenskampf des Christentums in Deutschland* (Herrford, 1990).

¹⁸ *Nach dem Erdgipfel: Global verantwortliches Handeln für das 21. Jahrhundert: Kommentare und Dokumente.* (Bonn, 1992), 253. This is an early version of the 'Earth Charter.' Later versions reduced the level of religious rhetoric.

¹⁹ See as an example Alfred Konstanti. *Göttliche Umwelt* (München, 1992).

In contrast with such idolatry-driven environmental ideology, healthy political policy growth and the growing sense of responsibility related to the environment, with their growing successes,²⁰ are morally responsible reactions to well-identified problems. This is the proper use of God-given moral and practical reason, which quietly assumes a relation between humans and the earth closer to biblical teaching than to the teaching found in idolatrous environmental philosophy.

2. The environmental critique of western moral philosophy

In recent centuries western ethical theory has been anthropocentric, whether this has been expressed in terms of *human* duty, consequences of our actions on other *humans*, the *human* social contract, or the development of moral virtue among *humans*. This common criticism coming from environmentalists is correct. Western ethical theory is also weak because it neglects sin as a theme, a related part of anthropocentrism.

However, offering a 'land ethic' or an 'eco-centric' ethic in place of supposed 'specicism' contributes to neglecting the millions of people dying from pollution. Moral values simply cannot come from impersonal nature or ecosystems; they can only come from the Creator of humanity and of nature, who has spoken in both crea-

tion and in redemption! For that reason one should not say: 'Leave the ways of humankind and follow the ways of nature.' Rather, the way to go is 'Leave the ways of humankind and follow the ways of the Creator.' Our Creator is the one who sustains nature and has entrusted care for creation to us. We must understand humanity and nature before God or we will distort the human to nature relationship.

Some older Christian writers already far surpassed anthropocentric ethics without becoming eco-centric. A nineteenth-century example is the theologically conservative Danish pietist Hans Lassen Martensen, who decried abuse of the environment.²¹ He not only viewed an understanding of sin as crucial to serious ethics; a lengthy quotation demonstrates his attempt to find a balanced understanding of nature.

The Christian view of nature and regard for nature offers a sharp contrast to an ascetic and pessimistic failure to consider nature which also degrades nature, whereby everything physical is seen as evil and in every natural beauty a demonic temptation is perceived. However, the Christian view is also opposed to the optimistic pagan view which does not want to see the undeniable disturbances of nature, which assumes the 'vanity' (impermanence) to which nature is subjected, which incessantly destroys nature's own structure and purpose (e.g., when a worm in nature secretly eats a blos-

²⁰ See also the critical investigation of the environmental movement by two of its leading German representatives: Dirk Maxeiner, Michael Miersch. *Öko-Optimismus* (Düsseldorf, 1996³); Dirk Maxeiner, Michael Miersch. *Lexikon der Öko-Irrtümer* (Frankfurt, 1998⁵)

²¹ Hans Lassen Martensen, *Die individuelle Ethik. Die Christliche Ethik: Spezieller Theil: Erste Abtheilung* (Gotha, 1878), 331-338, 'Die Liebe zu der unpersönlichen Creatur.' Published in Danish in 1854.

som and when the worm of illness and of death chews at the roots of human life, just when both should be unfolding in their respective beauty), and which calls us to admire as perfection in nature the terrifying war of all against all the animal world presents before our eyes, that 'fight for survival' in which the stronger creature torments and eradicates the weaker ones or where organic beings such as those swarms of insects spreading disaster, just like all the bugs which belong to the perfection in nature.²²

3. The environmental critique of Christian beliefs

The already mentioned attack on Christian beliefs coming in many forms from environmentalists is mistaken. Though Christians must be called to new efforts to care for God's world, this requires a new appreciation of core Christian beliefs, not a rejection of Christian beliefs in order to promote environmental responsibility. In this regard we note the comprehensive historical investigations of Udo Krolzik, *Umweltkrise: Folge des Christentums?* (English translation of the title: *The Environmental Crisis: A Consequence of Christianity?*). His summary merits quotation.

In answering the question of whether the environmental crisis is a consequence of Christianity, we can start with the following insights: It can be shown that the development of technology in the 12th and 13th centuries was indeed motivated and legitimated by Christianity, but it

was in no way characterized by an exploitative relationship to nature. It was not until the Renaissance dismantled the God-ward references for both humanity and nature that an understanding of humanity and nature emerged which gave nature its own value and denigrated it to pure means. This understanding, however, was limited up to the end of the 18th century by the Western conception coming from the monks that humankind, as God's worker, was to successfully bring expression to nature through cultivation. The representatives of this understanding rejected the view of the world as a machine. It was not until bourgeois commercialism that the idea of the world as a machine began to become a reality and to exploit nature. Since the environmental crisis has developed after the Industrial Revolution, it can be said that it is not actually a consequence of Christianity but that rather the consequence of secularization and of the self-referential focus of humanity associated with it.²³

We need a renewal of care for God's world that arises out of central Christian beliefs, not a rejection of Christian belief in order to protect creation.

4. Technology

In 1960, when Europe was less post-Christian, Gunther Backhaus could still entitle a book . . . and subdue it: *The Influence of the Christian Faith on the Development of Technology* (original Ger-

²² Martensen, *Ethik*, 332.

²³ Udo Krolzik, *Umweltkrise: Folge des Christentums?* (Stuttgart, 1979), 84.

man title: ... *und macht sie euch untertan: Der Einfluß des christlichen Glaubens auf die Entstehung der Technik*). The book views the statement to 'fill the earth and subdue it' as responsible for the emergence of technology in the Christian West and as having done so in a positive manner. His summary: 'The Bible is the precursor of technology.'²⁴

However, if technology is not subject to God's commands and becomes subject to either human-centred or humanity-denying ethical concepts—as does everything detached from God—technology becomes a threat to both humanity and creation. Some do not dare mention this. Instead of returning to the creation ordinances, they let themselves be talked into believing that the call to 'fill the earth and subdue it' is responsible for our present misery.

When people protect the environment, whether or not this is clearly articulated, it is done in response to God's commands built into creation,²⁵ not because nature has any claim in itself. It is a basic problem of the environmental movement that polluters are pronounced guilty from enormously high moral ground. However, without God such critics can neither dispense the moral force to truly change anything in a world ruled by mammon nor live themselves by the standards which they apply to others.

The Christian West brought about modern technology but attributed to it a subordinated significance. The authority humanity has over the earth (Gen 1:26-30), the mandate to subdue the earth, as emphasized, includes *building up* and *preserving*: 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it' (Gen 2:15). 'Building up' means to progressively and continuously alter something. It thus means, among other things, to develop by means of technology, preserving with conservational safeguards what is at hand. Both facets belong together.

It is delightful that within the framework of environmentalism Christian expressions and ideas have celebrated a revival in the mouth of opponents of Christianity. Suddenly such frowned-upon expressions as responsibility, guilt, and even 'preservation of creation' (biblical ideas!) are on everyone's lips. One knows too well that humanity—particularly in the Christian West but also elsewhere—is best motivated ethically when the element of responsibility is to a higher authority.

We perceive in this feature of the environmental movement an internal and hidden theological conflict that should be made explicit. Many environmentalists sense their need for a higher source of moral authority, outside of secular anthropocentric ethical theories, quietly making reference to the general revelation of God's moral law and the Christian tradition of morality, while they remain in conflict with Christian beliefs.

²⁴ Gunther Backhaus. . . . *und macht sie euch untertan: Der Einfluß des christlichen Glaubens auf die Entstehung der Technik*. Theologische Existenz heute NF 84 (München, 1960), 3.

²⁵ See the excellent article by Peter J. Leithart. 'Biblical Perspectives on the Environment,' *Contra Mundum: A Reformed Cultural Review* Nr. 2 (Winter 1992), 28-33.

5. Reason and the human to creation relationship

Because some theological claims (e.g., justification by faith alone) are purely a matter of faith, they rarely become culture-shaping. In contrast, our teaching about human nature and the role of humans in the universe is a matter of both faith and reason, making it a truth that is more easily contributed to our surrounding cultures. We can articulate our understanding of human nature in terms that are both faithful to the Bible and also partly accessible to reason in order to contribute to environmental ethics in our multiple cultures. Many people who do not yet believe in Jesus can benefit from our view of the human-nature relation which supports environmental responsibility. This step also replies to the hunger of our time for a definition of humanness.

In environmental ethics one sees many misconceptions of the human-to-nature relationship. Some deny human dignity and, by implication, also deny human responsibility. Others move toward worship of nature, as if nature is our creator. Some view the world as a vast machine of which we are merely pieces, while others view the earth as a spirit of which we are parts.

We are made in the image of God: what separates humans from animals is what humans receive directly from God's Spirit. People have a distinct role and dignity always in relation to the rest of creation. We should notice characteristics which are viewed in the Bible as being typically human with which, we think, social-scientific reason should agree:

- Thinking: humans think as does God
- Conscience: humans can assess

and decide, as does God

- Speaking: humans speak, and so does God
- Writing: humans can write, and so does God²⁶
- History: humans can retain their own knowledge, planning, and action and pass them on
- Individuals can build upon the experience of prior generations. God is a God who makes history
- Creativity: humans are able to create beauty as can God
- Community: humans communicate and love of their own accord, as does God

Because the environment is discussed within secular and multi-religious societies and because the meaning of humanness is always a theme, we should emphasize that Christian claims about human nature are partly faith but also partly reason. Our teaching on the image of God is a matter of faith, learned from the Bible, but many of our particular claims about what it means to be human are also confirmed by the sciences, even if science alone provides no ultimate interpretation. Such penultimate reasonable truths about human nature learned by science and observation should be brought into the global multi-religious discussions of human nature related to the environment. One illustration must suffice.

Ethnologist Hermann Trimborn, in his study *That which is human is found at the very basis of all cultures*,²⁷

²⁶ God wrote the first version of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 31:18).

²⁷ Hermann Trimborn. *Das Menschliche ist gleich im Urgrund aller Kulturen. Beiträge zum Geschichtsunterricht* 9. (Braunschweig, no date).

found commonalities among cultures. Though some claims would be more carefully expressed today, the significant commonalities noted by Trimborn merit attention. After demonstrating the enormous differences among cultures, he names two groups of commonalities. He first mentions human predispositions, the most important of which are the following:²⁸

- the enormous capacity for adaptation to changing environmental conditions
- the acceptance of the culture into which an individual is born, including perseverance
- the creative capacity for inventiveness and change.

He also describes many activities and features common to all cultures:²⁹ language, thought, commerce, division of labour, property, clothing, dwellings, society and blood relationships, raising children, public organizations, law, the uniformity of logical consciousness, the aesthetic sense, the need for a causal explanation of the world, and the capacity for religious experience.

It is striking how this catalogue agrees with the biblical assessment, and this is particularly clear when what is addressed here is not *how* the respective points (e.g., the family or law) are constructed in different cultures but the fact *that* these activities appear in all cultures. (Primarily at the *how* level, cultures differ from each other and deviate most from biblical norms.) At the same time, it is these common cultural features which dis-

tinguish human beings from animals, either gradually or fundamentally.³⁰

A striking similarity of Trimborn's ethnology with biblical teaching about human nature is the central role of language. Language had to be primary in his list of cultural features because it is assumed in every other feature. In the Bible we see God creating by speaking, while people shape and direct their sub-creation by means of words. Obviously, environmental ethics are words that shape our future.

The gradual disappearance of the Christian understanding of humanness—especially because of evolutionary theory—has had devastating results in the West. Our legislation sometimes protects animals better than children in their mothers' wombs. Under the previous influence of a biblical understanding of humanness, it was clear that the protection of human life had priority over the protection of animals. People no longer understand themselves or their relation to creation.

We are not surprised to see the influence of Kant, Darwin, Marx, and Freud in this loss of understanding of our humanness.³¹ Sigmund Freud described two great wounds to the 'self-love of humanity:' the Copernican Revolution

28 Trimborn, *Menschliche*, 18.

29 Trimborn, *Menschliche*, 19-35 (most expressions have been carried over literally).

30 The question remains whether Trimborn's results purely arise from research or whether the Christian view of humanity influenced him. Science is always influenced by worldviews and cultures. A Hindu researcher might not accept all of Trimborn's results, though a Hindu may be convinced of some of these claims on the basis of evidence.

31 See Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York, 1991), 326-354.

removed the earth from the centre of the universe; and 'biological research destroyed the alleged creation privilege of humanity.'³² Darwin and Marx were part of a process in which people in western civilization lost sight of their humanness.

To renew environmental ethics we must speak confidently about human distinctiveness and mention that what we say is only partly by faith; much of what we believe is also accessible to reason. And what we say answers some of the deepest existential questions which always surface in discussions of the environment. We are not cosmic accidents; God has commissioned us as his representatives to care for his earth and for our neighbours. And our neighbours have a place in God's earth which he has destined to develop from the Garden to the Heavenly City and which is also an object of God's redemption.

IV Conclusions

The global response to environmental problems will always be influenced

by religious, philosophical, and ideological components. Basic worldviews shape how people perceive the world, and those worldview-influenced perceptions will shape the actions of individuals, organizations, and nations. We have articulated themes which Christians can use to act responsively and creatively in regard to creation care which should also equip Christians to enter into a significant critical dialogue with the religious convictions of other people that are shaping their approaches to environmental care. We have to understand humanity and nature before God, or we else will distort our understanding of humanity or nature.

Our goals must be multifaceted: to equip people for responsible and compassionate action, while also demonstrating the compelling power of the Christian faith in such a manner that both convinces regarding Christian truth claims and influences the global public discussion. Caring for creation is among the first commands of God recorded in the Bible. And we have to genuinely love the millions of our neighbours who are sick or dying because we have not cared for God's creation deeply enough.

³² Sigmund Freud. *Allgemeine Neurosenlehre. Teil III*. Studienausgabe (Frankfurt, 1989), 283-284 (from 'Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse,' 1916/17).

Worldview and Identity across Conversion

Hannes Wiher

Key Words: Conscience orientation, identity, personality, creation, sociology, psychology, dualism, holistic, soteriology, church

I Introduction

When travelling around the world today, we find Christians in just about all countries and almost all people groups. However, although they all call themselves Christians, they behave very differently in different places and cultures. The attention of anthropologists has been drawn to this fact in recent years. It is understood more and more that worldview is the underlying factor for these different behaviours. Worldview determines the behaviour of people, their personalities and their cultures. Therefore, if we want to understand people and their behaviour, we have to understand worldview. Building on this insight, two eminent evangelical anthropologists, Charles Kraft and Paul Hiebert, have written books on this topic.¹

It follows then that if we want to understand people's behaviour during conversion, we have to understand their worldview before, during and after conversion. As an element of the deep layers of personality, culture and religion, worldview is closely related to identity. This is the reason we look at both elements when looking at the development of behaviours across conversion.

However, the problem is that worldview, culture and religion are very fuzzy concepts with many different definitions. For this reason, several anthropologists have abandoned these concepts. Taking the opposite stance, we propose to examine worldview through four simple models:² the stratigraphic model of creation, the model of the five basic soteriological concepts,

Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008).

² In the social sciences, models simplify reality in order to help us understand its complexity, to shed light on certain aspects of it and to give us orientation for our action.

¹ Charles Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena: WCL, 2008); Paul G. Hiebert,

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the model of the conscience orientation and the time concept.

II Definition of Worldview

Worldview is at the core of personality, culture and religion. It is like the BIOS that formats the functioning of a computer. According to the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, worldview is 'a way to see the world and ourselves. It is the image that the members of a culture share of the way how things really are, a conception of nature, of self, and society'.³ We can say that worldviews are like 'glasses'. For Charles Kraft, the worldview comprises the basic assumptions, presuppositions and values, in short the conceptualizations of a culture.⁴

In a functionalist perspective, a worldview can be understood as a set of interpretations of the world, society and self in order to answer the questions and to solve the problems of everyday life.⁵ Hiebert defines worldview as the 'fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things and which they use to order

their lives'.⁶

Thus, worldview has not only cognitive dimensions as mostly used by philosophers.⁷ The evaluative and affective aspects touch deeper layers of personality, culture and religion than the cognitive aspects. The stratigraphic model of creation, the model of the five basic soteriological concepts and the time concept emphasize the cognitive aspects of worldview. The evaluative and affective aspects are mainly represented by the model of conscience orientation.

III Models of Worldview

In the following section, we will present the four models through which we propose to examine worldview.

1. Stratigraphic model of creation

A simple way to look at worldview is through the stratigraphic model of creation. How does a worldview organize the different elements of creation like matter, plants, animals, human beings, spirits and gods? By simplifying we can structure the worldviews into four ideal-typical groups: holistic, Hebrew, dualistic and secular. Figure 1 shows how the different worldviews structure creation.⁸

3 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 303.

4 Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005 [1st ed. 1979]), 53-56.

5 Lothar Käser, *Foreign Cultures, a Cognitive Approach. An Introduction to Ethnology for Development Aid Workers and Church Workers Abroad*, translated from German by Geoffrey Sutton (Nurnberg, VTR, in print), 37.

6 Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 15, 25.

7 See e.g. Brian J. Walsh & J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1984).

8 Cf. a similar model in Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 158.

Figure 1. Typology of Worldviews

Holistic Worldview	Hebrew Worldview	Dualistic Worldview	Secular Worldview
	God		Invisible aspect excluded
Supreme Being		Spirit	
Ancestors	Angels	“Excluded Middle”	Humans
Spirits	Spirits		
Humans	Humans	Humans	Animals
Animals	Animals	Animals	Plants
Plants	Plants	Plants	Matter
Matter	Matter	Matter	

In the holistic worldview, the universe forms one whole. Typical examples of cultural systems and world religions which fit into a holistic worldview are animism, Hinduism, Taoism, Shintoism, Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism, and all the folk religions. The Hebrew worldview has developed out of a holistic worldview (Genesis-Leviticus). The Hebrew God declares that he is the Creator separate from creation, that he is ‘holy’ (Gen 1-2; Lev 19:2). As a reform movement of Judaism, Islam has adopted the Hebrew worldview.⁹

The dualistic worldview separates the material, visible from the immaterial, invisible world. A typical example would be Plato’s dualistic philosophy. In medieval Roman Catholic Europe, influenced by Neo-Platonism, the middle realm of existence, which is influenced by the spiritual world and relates to all the basic daily problems in animistic and folk religionist cultures,

was excluded from the worldview.¹⁰ Enlightenment philosophy has gone a step further to exclude the whole invisible aspect from the worldview. It takes only into consideration what is observable and measurable. Typical examples of this secular worldview are the Aristotelian philosophy, the European Enlightenment philosophy, the initial Confucian philosophy and the pure form of Theravada Buddhism, basically also a secular materialist philosophy.

It becomes evident that when a person moves from Hinduism or a secular outlook to the Christian or Islamic faith, she cannot change her worldview at once. It will take a great and long effort of teaching until some of the presuppositions and assumptions acquired during early childhood will have been transformed. Obviously, these ideal-typical worldviews can be mixed in one person.

⁹ However, in relation to the five basic soteriological concepts and the time concept we may find many differences between the Islamic and the Hebrew worldview.

¹⁰ The concept of the ‘excluded middle’ has been coined by Paul G. Hiebert, ‘The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,’ *Missiology: An International Review* 10/1 (1982): 35-47; see also Paul G. Hiebert et al., ‘Split-Level Christianity,’ in *Understanding Folk Religion* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1999), 89-91.

As an evangelical Christian I have a Hebrew worldview. But through my socialization in Swiss society and schools, my worldview includes some dualistic elements along with secular elements acquired through my higher studies. These different worldviews are operational in my everyday life in different situations: when I am ill, I have the reflex to take a drug, a thought driven by the secular worldview. But then I am also urged to pray, a response driven by my Hebrew worldview. Driven by my dualistic worldview, I have no problem to continue to work when I am sick even though I should rest.

2. The model of soteriological concepts

The second model by which we understand worldview consists of the five basic soteriological concepts (God, man, evil, sin, salvation).

Evangelism has traditionally started with announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lord. But the coming of God's Kingdom and the forgiveness of sin are not good news when there are no sins to forgive, such as is the case, for example, with Islam where humanity is created good but weak and it is normal to sin (Surah 2:36; 4:28). The same is the case when Jesus Christ is not acknowledged as Lord and God as in Islam where Isa is venerated as a great prophet, in rank just after Muhammad. The concept of Son of God is abhorred as idolatry in Islam (Surah 5:72; 6:100-101; 9:30-31). Reasons may be the ancient Marianite sect's teaching in peninsular Arabia that the Trinity is composed of the Father, Mary and Jesus, or ideas about nocturnal visits of spiritual beings.

There is no use of announcing salvation from sin where sin is not a problem. Sin is closely related to the concept of evil. How did evil enter the world? Is evil linked to destiny which is sent by the Supreme God? (Surah 35:15). Or has evil entered a good creation by an entirely good God through the initiative of his Adversary, Satan? Further on, the concept of sin is also closely related to the concept of Man. Is Man created in the image and likeness of God or is this idea of being like God blasphemy (Surah 112)? Is man's sinfulness normal or does it separate him from the fellowship with God?

The concept of man leads us to the concept of God. We have seen that Islam has adopted the Hebrew worldview: God is separated from creation. He is 'holy'. On the other hand, Eastern concepts of deity are monistic and pantheistic: the Supreme Being is part of the universe and is in everything. Many Eastern religions have a holistic worldview.

The next question is: what is the moral quality of deity? The holiness of the Biblical God is of a moral quality that is hard to find in other religious systems where deities represent the whole spectrum of human character, for example in Greek mythology and in the Hindu pantheon.

In conclusion, we have to notice that teaching salvation makes sense only when the concepts of sin and evil are carefully studied, and these in turn are based on the concepts of mankind and God. The Bible teaches these concepts throughout, starting from its first three chapters (Gen 1-3). Based on these insights, missiologists have started to implement chronological Bible studies, and in oral cultures, Chronological Bi-

ble Storying (CBS).¹¹

A very useful example of presenting the different soteriological concepts in narrative form and in Islamic contexts is Yehia Sa'a's book *All That the Prophets Have Spoken*.¹² Its concept is based on Luke 24:44-46 where Jesus explains the messianic prophecies from the OT to the two Emmaus disciples. *All That the Prophets Have Spoken* is a shortened adaptation of McIlwain's basic and pioneering *Building on Firm Foundations*.¹³

What is the relation to worldview? These five basic soteriological concepts build up a worldview, biblical or other. They have to be worked on during evangelism and after conversion in order to transform the convert's previously existing worldview into a biblical one. If these chronological, transformational Bible studies are not integrated into the discipleship process, worldviews will remain unchanged.

This fact sheds also light on the discussion as to whether the OT is replaceable by the cultural-religious systems in place as 'preparation of the Gospel' (*praeparatio evangelica*). Obviously, other religious systems will build up different worldviews and can therefore not replace the OT with its Hebrew worldview.

3. The model of conscience orientation

In Catholic moral theology, psychology and philosophy, the conscience has remained an important topic until the present time. In Protestant theology and in the social sciences it has disappeared from view. It is part of the 'black box' upon which social sciences do not reflect; instead, they concentrate on the incoming stimuli and the outcomes. Nevertheless, it is of fundamental importance to understand the underlying factors of human behaviour. In an old fashioned way, we call these 'the conscience'.

Every human being is born with a disposition to develop a conscience. Norms are learned from significant others through reinforcement or withdrawal of love in the dialogical tension between self and other. Conscience is thus developed during early childhood in ways that depend on the cultural context, producing different conscience orientations. In relation to our models of worldview, the former two models emphasize the cognitive aspects of worldview, the model of conscience orientation represents deeper layers of personality, culture and religion, the evaluative and affective aspects. Conscience orientation is an interdisciplinary model (theological, psychological and anthropological).

Conscience is developed during early childhood in ways that depend on the cultural context. The American anthropologist Melford Spiro¹⁴ observed that children raised by a few educa-

¹¹ See www.oralcity.net.

¹² (Gatineau: Goodseed, 2000). This book is an adaptation for a Muslim context of John Cross, *The Stranger on the Emmaus Road* (Gatineau: Goodseed, 1996) developed for Westerners. An adaptation for Eastern contexts is John Cross, *By This Name* (Gatineau: Goodseed, 2006). The integral text of all these books is available in English, French and Arabic, and other languages on www.goodseed.com.

¹³ 9 vols., 5th pr. (Sanford: New Tribes Mission, 1991).

¹⁴ Melford E. Spiro, *Children of the Kibbutz* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), chap. 15, particularly 408f.

tors, for example father and mother in a nuclear family, integrate not only the norms presented but also the educators themselves into their conscience. Thus, they function with a fixed set of rules and develop rules-centred personalities. They organize their lives with an agenda; they tend to be punctual, pursuing clear objectives. Work is more important than relationships. Since their conscience functions autonomously, they tend to become individualists. When they violate the norms, they feel guilty. This is why Spiro calls this a guilt-oriented conscience.

However, when children are raised by many educators, for example in an extended family, they integrate the norms, but cannot integrate the educators into their conscience. They remain thus dependent on the presence of these significant others in order that their conscience functions properly. When the mother is present, the mother's norms are functional; if the grandmother is present, the grandmother's norms are functional. These children tend to develop a relational personality with a group identity. They prefer personal interactions to work, and during work they prefer team work. Their focus is status rather than achievement and objectives.

If nobody is present, then no norms are functional. This fact represents the basis of the phenomenon that Westerners call corruption. This type of conscience functions according to the slogan: 'As long as nobody sees it, you can do anything'. But if the violation of the norm becomes known and public, shame arises. This is why Spiro calls this a shame-oriented conscience.

With the number of educators influencing the outcome of worldview,

Spiro gives us an interesting model for worldview development. But, of course, Spiro's model does not show the entire reality. A Chinese baby growing up in a nuclear family in Beijing will still be relational, even though it is raised by few educators. There are other factors influencing the conscience development, especially the mode of education. If the educators present the norms by giving explanations and arguments (rules), the child's conscience will become predominantly rules-centred. If the educators emphasize the relational aspect of the norms like 'What will the neighbours say?' or 'When Daddy comes home, he will spank you,' then the child will develop a relational conscience.

If very few norms are presented, then the conscience either becomes relational or does not develop properly. This happened in the '68-generation' that rejected the traditional norms of Western society. Their children have either become predominantly shame-oriented or have underdeveloped mal-functioning consciences, neither shame nor guilt-oriented. A 10-year old boy with such an underdeveloped conscience can stab his colleague without remorse.

Adapting Lingenfelter and Mayers' model of basic values,¹⁵ we can develop a personality typology based on the conscience orientation (see Figure 2).¹⁶

¹⁵ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter & Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986).

¹⁶ See a more detailed discussion of this model and its personality typology in Hannes Wiher, *Shame and Guilt: A Key to Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Bonn: Culture and Science Publica-

Figure 2. Personality Typology

Rules-centred Conscience	Relational Conscience
Individualism Time Orientation Task Orientation Achievement Focus Analytic Thinking Courage to Lose Face	Collectivism Event Orientation Person Orientation Status Focus Holistic Thinking Fear of Losing Face

This typology represents ideal types, every person being a mixture of both conscience orientations. It is useful to know our profile in order to understand better how and why we behave as we do and to understand better our partners, friends, colleagues and disciples.

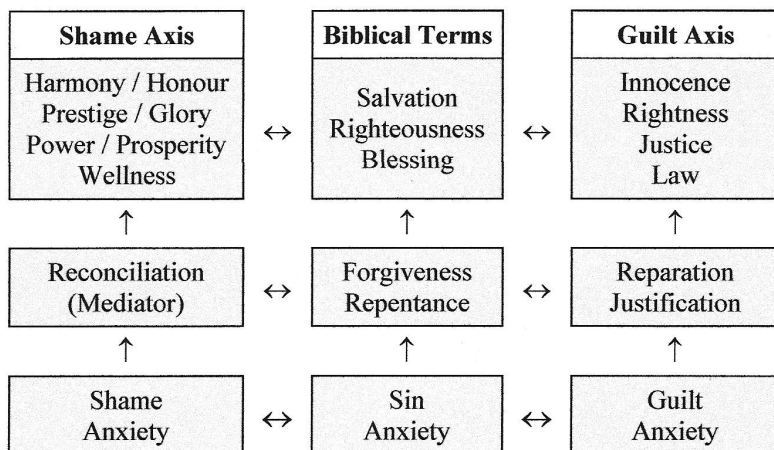
Shame and guilt being expressions of sin, the model of conscience orientation becomes a soteriological model. The conscience tends towards peace expressed through harmony or justice. The rules-centred conscience searches to repair the fault in order to regain innocence and justice. Martin Luther's main concern was to find innocence, through reparation (justification) of his personal, individual guilt, given freely by a gracious God.

Relational consciences want to restore harmony and honour with the significant others through reconciliation. As they are caught in shame, they need a third person, a mediator, to help them in the restoration process. The main emphasis of rules-centred per-

sons is justice expressed in law and order while relational persons look for harmony, power, prosperity, prestige and wellness.

For rules-centred persons and societies, human rights are an important issue, while for relational persons and cultures the corporate honour and dignity is in the fore-front (cf. the Muhammad caricatures). Figure 3 shows the positive and negative basic values of the soteriological model of conscience orientation schematically.

At conversion, a deep personality structure like the conscience orientation will not change automatically. The only way to transform the different values is to work on them intentionally. The deep layers established during early childhood will allow little change, but the later elements of conscience orientation will be open to modelling. Relational elements can be added through a relational education or lifestyle, for example an intimate covenant relationship with the Biblical God. Rules-centred elements will be accessible to insertion of rules into people's lives, for example a tight agenda or the Ten Commandments.

Figure 3. Soteriological Model of Conscience Orientation

4. The model of the concept of time

Because of its particular importance in everyday life and in theological discourse, with the fourth model we will deepen and nuance the understanding of one of the basic values of the personality typology in the perspective of conscience orientation: it is the concept of time. The rules-centred persons organize their lives with their agenda, have a prefixed program and will want to be punctual. Contrary to this, relational persons attribute little importance to time and are more person and event-oriented.¹⁷ The well-known passage from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 represents an event orientation typical for relational cultures.

But there is an additional aspect to the concept of time: the past and future

time perspective.¹⁸ Many people, like the Hebrews, take their orientation from the ancestral traditions. These people are like rowers looking backwards. They conceive of the future as in their back (Ps 143:5; Is 46:10; Jer 29:11).¹⁹ John Mbiti shows a similar conception in Swahili. In his doctoral thesis, he insists that the Akamba people of Kenya have no future concept.²⁰ Several theologians and scientists have rightly criticized this extreme view.²¹

With Leonard Nyirongo and Benjie van der Walt we prefer to say that

¹⁸ Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*, 286-287.

¹⁹ A.E. Hill, *NIDOTTE* 1, 361-362; H.W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), § 10.

²⁰ John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (London: SPCK, 1969), 24ff.

²¹ Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1975); K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University, 1987).

¹⁷ Cf. Lingenfelter & Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*.

there is no incapability to conceive of the future, but rather a difference in time perspective, which in this case is more oriented towards the past.²² Lingenfelter and Mayers call the past time perspective 'absence of crisis orientation', and the future time perspective 'crisis orientation'.²³ For persons or cultures with a past time perspective it is extremely difficult to foresee the future with its potential opportunities and problems, for example a drug shortage in a pharmacy, or to plan by objectives.

How did this change from past to future time perspective come about in the OT? According to Gerhard von Rad, the Israelites started to turn to the future because of the prophets announcing the day of Yahweh with the consequence that the time concept has become linear and future oriented.²⁴ This future perspective became particularly prominent in the eschatological vision of the NT. The NT authors introduced the concept of the 'eschatological interim' and emphasized the eschatological future.²⁵

This eschatological vision was very unique in the Ancient Near East. Because of the past time perspective, for certain persons it is difficult to conceive even today. This is probably the reason why two contemporary movements have largely neglected the eschatological interim. First of all, the ecumenical movement chose for its 1973 missionary conference in Bangkok the theme 'Salvation now!'²⁶ In the following years, the WCC started to support revolutionary movements in Southern Africa in order to hasten salvation for these peoples.

A second movement, which is called the 'Health and Wealth Gospel', neglects the concept of the eschatological interim in its theology.²⁷ On the basis of the cultural concept of salvation, which can be very close to the OT concept of *shalom*, a sincere Christian faith is automatically associated with health, prosperity and wealth. According to the formula *do ut des* (I give you in order that you give me back), God will return a hundredfold what is given to Him. In the logic of the 'prosperity gospel', a faithful Christian cannot be ill or poor.

22 Leonard Nyirongo, *The Gods of Africa or The God of the Bible? The Snares of African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1997), 89-98; Bennie J. van der Walt, *Afrocentric or Eurocentric?* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1997), 64-66; Wiher, *Shame and Guilt*, 286-287.

23 Lingenfelter & Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*.

24 Gerhard von Rad, 'Israel's Concepts of Time and History: The Eschatology of the Prophets', in *Old Testament Theology. Volume 2, The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (New York: Harper, 1965).

25 Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and His-*

tory (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964); idem, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

26 Cf. e.g. Arthur P. Johnston, 'Bangkok 1973: A Different Gospel with a Different Mission', in *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978).

27 Cf. e.g. Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel: What's Going on Today in a Movement That Has Shaped the Faith of Millions?* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1987); Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *The Word-Faith Controversy: Understanding the Health and Wealth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

From the theological point of view, this movement does not take into account the nuanced NT concept of salvation: through his substitutionary sacrifice Jesus Christ has made possible salvation; it is a free gift from God that cannot be manipulated. Through the first coming of Jesus Christ, the reign of God has come near (Mk 1:15), but we have not yet arrived at consummation, the New Jerusalem, exempt of sickness and pain (Rev 21-22). The reign of God will be completely realized only after Jesus' second coming and the New Creation.

From the anthropological point of view, the prosperity gospel has an anthropocentric and holistic worldview. From the point of view of the five soteriological concepts, the movement identifies its cultural concept of salvation with the OT concept without considering the NT differentiation, especially the eschatological dimension of salvation. Concerning the conscience orientation, the prosperity gospel is supported by a relational worldview which pursues harmony, honour and power before men, and health, well-being and prosperity for oneself. Thus, a large part of the world population tends to adopt the prosperity gospel by its worldview and fills the churches of pastors who preach this theology.

This is one factor that contributes to the success of churches like the 'Universal Church of the Reign of God' and 'Salt of the Earth' in Brazil, 'El Shaddai' in the Philippines, the 'Church of God (Aladura)', the 'Celestial Church' and the 'Redeemed Christian Church of God' in Nigeria, and the 'Kimbanguist Church' in the Democratic Republic

of Congo.²⁸ Referring to this, the African section of the Lausanne Theology Working Group writes: 'We therefore wonder if much popular Christianity is a syncretised super-structure on an underlying worldview that has not been radically transformed by the biblical gospel'.²⁹

IV Identity in Theological and Psychological Perspective

After having presented the four models to understand worldview, we will now try to see how identity is linked to worldview. For this we look at theological and psychological approaches to identity.

The theological basis of our identity is God: in the perspective of creation, we are God's creatures, created in his image (Gen 1:26-27). In a soteriological perspective, all who have accepted Christ are God's children (Jn 1:12). And all 'those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ... And by him we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom 8:14-15). In missiological perspective, we are sent by Jesus just as Jesus has been sent by the Father (Jn 20:21, cf. 17:18). The Greek term 'apostle', meaning 'sent one', testifies to this missionary identity of the disciples. The apostle Paul introduces most of his letters by 'Paul,

²⁸ www.igrejauniversal.org.br; www.saldaterra.org.br; www.chanrobles.com/elshaddai.htm; www.aladura.de; www.celestialchurch.com; www.rccg.org; www.kimbanguisme.com/e-option2.htm.

²⁹ 'Lausanne Theology Working Group Statement on the Prosperity Gospel', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34, 2 (2010): 99-102, citation 101.

apostle of Christ Jesus'.³⁰ It is an important goal in the discipleship process to build up an identity 'in Christ'.

In psychological perspective, identity develops in the dialogical tension between self and other. In this process, identity development is closely related to the emergence of shame and guilt which evolve in the same dialogical tension. The link between worldview and identity is established through the priority of certain values in conscience orientation. Identity is then constructed in a process during which past experiences, values and thought systems are integrated into a unified, organized and coherent personality structure.

During conversion, two or more non-integrated cultural systems co-exist. If integration of these does not take place, 'multiple personalities' are the consequence. These are the basis for syncretistic behaviour. That is why integration is of special importance during conversion. This integration is rendered possible by 'critical contextualization'³¹ of the following sectors:

- Comparison between the Bible and values, thought systems, and behaviour styles transmitted by the parents
- Comparison between the Bible and the 'Christian' culture
- Comparison between the Bible and society.

This integration implies a critical

contextualization of what Hans Bürki calls the 'cultural skins'.³²

V Worldview and Identity in Religions

After having studied the models of worldview and identity, we ask how they correlate to cultures and religions. As the stratigraphic model of creation shows (Fig. 1), most religions are built on an holistic worldview. This applies to animism, Hinduism, Taoism, Mahayana-Buddhism, Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism and Shintoism. In terms of conscience orientation, holistic worldviews are relational and harmony-centred. Our approach to animists and adherents of South and East Asian religions will therefore be relational, holistic and harmony-centred.

Worldviews in folk religions are predominantly animistic.³³ As most believers around the world are folk religionists,³⁴ most inhabitants of our

³² Hans Bürki mentions the following cultural skins surrounding the self, which should be worked on during and after conversion: affective skin (imitation, intuition, initiative), skin of the defence mechanism (mask, persona), intellectual skin, physical skin (face, body, sense, clothes), linguistic skin (hides or reveals), family and friendship skin (privileged relationships), socio-cultural skin, cosmic skin (space, time), transcendental skin (light, darkness). Hans Bürki, 'Évangile et culture', in *Évangile, culture et idéologies*, eds. René Padilla, Hans Bürki, Samuel Escobar (Lausanne: Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 1977), 13-50.

³³ This is because in the animistic worldview sickness and bad luck are caused by spiritual beings. Thus, the spiritual realm is dominating everyday life.

³⁴ Hiebert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 9.

³⁰ Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1.

³¹ Paul G. Hiebert, 'Critical Contextualization', *Missiology* 12 (1984): 287-296; reprint: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (1987): 104-112.

globe have a holistic worldview. Besides being holistic, in terms of the five basic soteriological concepts, the animistic worldview is pantheistic, anthropocentric, with a social definition of sin and a prosperity concept of salvation. In terms of conscience orientation, the holistic worldview is relational with person orientation, status focus and holistic thinking and thus an and-and-logic.³⁵ Our approach to folk religionists will therefore be relational and holistic.

Identity is closely linked with religion through worldview. This becomes apparent in the stratigraphic model of creation and in the model of the five soteriological concepts which are defined by the cognitive aspects of religions and philosophies. It is less apparent in the model of conscience orientation which represents the values that are given priority by a religion.

VI Conversion in Theological and Anthropological Perspective

From an evangelical point of view, conversion is a central feature in the Bible. Here we will look at it from a theological and an anthropological viewpoint.

In theological perspective, conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit who 'convicts' or 'persuades' the conscience of a person (Jn 14:6; 16:8; Rom 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-10). The Greek term for 'convict' is *elengcho*. The study of the human conscience is a basic element of the studies of evangelism and

conversion. On the basis of the Greek term, this field of study is called 'elenc-tics'.

The Hebrew (and Greek) terms for sin mean literally 'missing the mark' (*hata* and *hamartia* respectively) or 'deviating from the way' (*'awon* and *paraptoma*). The 'turning around' of conversion (*shub* and *epistrepho*) is correcting this wrong direction in order to march towards the real goal which is God. The wrong goals are either other gods or the self.

In the NT, the apostle Paul uses OT concepts like justification, redemption and sanctification (Rom 3:21-26; 5:1-5; 1 Cor 1:30), and introduces new imaged terms like regeneration, new creation, reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20) and adoption (Rom 8:14-17). These different terms illuminate different aspects of conversion.

While conversion in theological perspective is a one-point event (regeneration),³⁶ in anthropological perspective it is a process which can last a long period. The different disciplines of the natural and social sciences illuminate different aspects of this process. In the psychological perspective, conversion is part of the general process of maturation of a person: a person feels a void, something is lacking in her life. In this view, conversion is a solution for the Oedipus complex through which a strong image of Father is created. Thus, religion strengthens the personality.

In the sociological perspective, conversion is seen as a normal part of the process of socialization: to adopt

³⁵ This is the reason why animists and folk religionists have no problems with syncretistic behaviour.

³⁶ In the Engel scale, it is represented by the 'new creation' point 0.

Figure 4. Model of the Conversion Process (modified Engel Scale)

God's Role	Missionary's Role	Scale	Reaction of the Person
General Revelation	Information	-9	Ignore the idea of God
General Revelation	Information	-8	Accept the idea of God
Conviction	Information	-7 - -5	Know the Bible
Conviction	Call	-4 - -3	Consider decision
Conviction	Call	-2	Decision
Conviction	Follow up	-1	Evaluate decision
Regeneration	Follow up	0	New creation
Sanctification	Edification	+1	Growth
Sanctification	Edification	+2	Become a Disciple
Sanctification	Edification	+3	Make Disciples

a certain conviction can be the consequence of social pressure or it can make integration into a social group easier. Along these lines of thought, for Geertz, religion is the 'socially available system of meaning'.³⁷ In the physiological perspective, a decision can be facilitated during this process by an over stimulation of the nervous system through music, repetitious rhythms, mystic meditation and other techniques. Finally, in the perspective of communication theory, conversion is a process of communication.

This process of conversion, which the author considers as the discipleship process, has different stages. In every stage, different issues are at the forefront. On the basis of these findings, James Engel has conceived a scale which we have adapted for our purposes (see Figure 4).³⁸

How can we take advantage of the findings of the social sciences and of the Engel scale for our topic, the transformation of worldview? Social sciences have confirmed that we are what we believe and what we are convinced of. Our convictions determine our behaviour. If we want to change our behaviour, we have to change our convictions. In order to change our convictions, we have to change our knowledge by giving new or supplementary information.³⁹

Here we can profit from the Engel scale and introduce the stratigraphic model of creation and the five basic soteriological concepts into the discipleship process. The social influence operates essentially on the level of convictions, attitudes and intentions. Here

³⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

³⁸ James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian*

Communication: Its Theory and Practice (Nashville: Nelson, 1979).

³⁹ See Martin Fishbein & Icek Ajzen, *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior* (Reading, MS: Addison-Wesley, 1975).

we can introduce our new insights on how conscience orientation can be transformed. The other influences operate on the level of behaviour itself.

Having laid the foundations for a deeper understanding of the three concepts (worldview, identity and conversion), in the following sections, we will study their relationship to each other. We will ask how worldview and identity develop across conversion.

VII Worldview and Identity before Conversion

Evangelism is geared to the worldview of the receptor community. This means that the communicator follows the rules of cross-cultural communication: starting with a message in continuity (with known, understandable and acceptable elements) and continuing later with elements in discontinuity (more difficult and less understandable and acceptable material).

A good example from the Bible is when God starts to present Himself to the animist Abram as the Supreme Being of the Semitic (animistic) universe ('*el* or '*elohim*: Gen 17:1). But God specifies without delay how he is different from other animistic gods: He is not a local but a universal, omnipotent God ('*el shadday*: Gen 17:1; 28:13-14) and he does not tolerate any other divinities beside him (Gen 35:1-2; cf. Ex. 20:3). To Moses he presents himself then as Yahweh (Ex 3:14). Later on, 'the Redeemer' is added to God's presentation (*go'el* 'the closest parent': Ruth; Is. 63:16), and finally 'the Father' (Is 63:16; Mt 6:9).

If the audience has an animistic worldview (which is relational and holistic), then aspects of the Bible which

are relational and holistic should be first presented in the communication of the Gospel (e.g. life stories, parables, riddles, aspects of the covenant relationship). If the audience pursues harmony and prosperity, primarily elements of the Gospel which stress these elements are selected (e.g. life in abundance: Jn 10:10). After conversion, the message should be balanced and elements in continuity and discontinuity should be presented in order to transform the worldview.

VIII Worldview and Identity across Conversion

Across conversion worldview and identity can change or remain unchanged.

1. Worldview and identity change across conversion

In theological perspective, transformation across conversion is God's work: 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Cor 5:17). It is evident that this verse talks about the core of a person which the Bible calls often the 'name'. A misinterpretation of this verse has led many believers to understand that cultural features have no value during and after conversion. Another verse seems to confirm this misinterpretation: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28). However, it is evident that cultural just as racial and gender differences remain entirely or partially after conversion. But based on the misinterpretation of the former verses, the 'cultural skins' are ignored.

In anthropological perspective, the worldview changes across conversion when the convert changes the environment in relation to his model of creation: if the convert comes, for example, from an animistic worldview, a dualistic worldview can be introduced through preaching and teaching. The worldview can change in relation to the conscience orientation, if the convert comes from a relational into a rules-centred community or vice versa. For example, if the society is relational and the believers' community rules-centred due to a certain type of preaching and teaching, the convert's conscience orientation will gradually become more rules-centred.

The worldview is also transformed, if the five basic soteriological concepts are worked on systematically. For example, if the Supreme God is seen as the origin of destiny and thus perceived as potentially good or evil, the teaching of the biblical concepts of God and of evil will show that God is good and all that he has created and provides in life is good. Evil comes from His counterpart: Satan. Or, if prosperity is understood as God's gift regardless of our merits but based on our trust in him, the convert will not anymore try to influence his chance in life on the basis of the general rule 'I give you so that you give me (many fold)'.

One example of systematic teaching is what happened under Calvin's influence in Geneva in the 16th century: within a few years, Calvin preached 2500 sermons covering the whole Bible and transformed the consciences of the people of Geneva—one could almost say—despite their will. Through these systematic Bible studies the process of critical contextualization can build

up a new identity which is based on an integrated personality system.

2. Worldview and identity remain unchanged across Conversion

In theological perspective, there is no transformation when regeneration does not take place. This happens for example when the convert makes his decision due to social pressure or if his motivation is based on economic factors (cf. the 'rice Christians') or sexual pressure (to find favour with his prospective wife).

In anthropological perspective, the worldview can remain unchanged if it is the same in society and the believing community. For example, in an Islamic society, believers may all have maintained an Islamic worldview which is similar to the Hebrew worldview in some creational aspects, although it is different in most soteriological aspects. In relation to conscience orientation, the convert may come from a relational society into a relational believing community.

The worldview does not need to change either when the five basic soteriological concepts are the same in the society and the believing community. This is the case in a syncretistic believing community. If there are different conceptions between society and believing community, the concepts remain unchanged, if they are not taught systematically. This is the case in most believing communities around the world as systematic teaching is rarely seen as basic in the discipleship process and as Bible studies are not very popular.

Let us remember the fact that the

worldview influences largely our everyday behaviour. Believers will thus behave in the same way as society and not make any difference.

IX Worldview and Identity after Conversion

When after conversion a 'Christian' worldview and an identity 'in Christ' develop, these can replace the pre-Christian worldview and identity or co-exist with them.

1. Formation of a 'Christian' worldview and identity after conversion

There are many publications which stress the importance of the formation of a 'Christian' worldview after conversion.⁴⁰ But what is a 'Christian' worldview? There are several ways to define it.

First, a 'Christian' worldview can be defined as the 'worldview of Christians'. However, a convert who has grown up with a Hindu worldview will still keep his Hindu worldview while being a Christian and he will function in his everyday life according to the Hindu worldview. A convert from an animistic background will function in his everyday life according to his ani-

mistic worldview. A convert from an Islamic background will still function with his Islamic worldview while being a Christian.

Others define a 'Christian' worldview with familiar, cognitive, philosophical concepts coined in the west.⁴¹ Christians from the Global South who have grown up in relational and non-Christian societies bring other worldview backgrounds into their Christian life. On these grounds, they interpret the Bible differently and cannot adhere to western definitions of a 'Christian' worldview.

Still others define a 'Christian' worldview as a *biblical* worldview. The problem with this definition is that there are different worldviews in the Bible: in the OT different expressions of the Hebrew worldview during more than a thousand years, and in the NT different Greek elements mixed into the Hebrew worldview. Authors who are aware of this speak of a Hebrew-Christian worldview implying that it is based on the worldviews presented in the OT and that it does not have to be Western.

The author prefers to simply speak of a Hebrew worldview but defining it through the stratigraphic model of creation and the five basic soteriological concepts presented in the OT. Understanding this OT foundation of a 'Christian' worldview, it becomes clear that a Hindu or an animistic worldview cannot prepare people for the Gospel in the sense that they do not need the worldview presented in the OT anymore. Only biblical stories will be able

40 E.g.: Walsh & Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*; B.J. van der Walt, *The Liberating Message: A Christian Worldview for Africa* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1994); Darrow L. Miller & Stan Guthrie, *Disciplining Nations: Guide to a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: YWAM, 2000); Philip Graham Ryken, *What is the Christian Worldview?* Reformed Faith Series (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006).

41 E.g. Walsh & Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*.

to model a worldview which will be able to transform personalities and cultures in a way that God has intended.

What should we then aim for after conversion? Through intensive Bible teaching, our objective is to transform the pre-existing worldview and identity gradually and progressively into a Hebrew worldview and an identity 'in Christ'. This will be a lifelong process.

2. Coexistence of a pre-Christian and a 'Christian' worldview and identity after conversion

In quite a few Christians and faith communities around the world, the pre-Christian worldview remains despite the development of a 'Christian' worldview. This is the case when the two worldviews pertain to different areas of life: while the 'Christian' worldview manages life on Sunday in the faith community and family, the pre-conversion worldview manages public life, work and the week days.

This condition is favoured by the fact that a relational personality or culture with a holistic type of thinking has an and-and-logic. Thus, contradicting worldviews can co-exist for different areas of life. This fact approaches the phenomenon of 'multiple personalities'. People with an analytic type of thinking have an either-or-logic and have problems with this way of conceiving of a Christian life. They tend to call this phenomenon 'syncretism' or 'Christo-paganism'.

When two cultural systems coexist in a person, then we encounter what Hiebert calls 'split-level Christianity'.⁴²

The two systems compete for dominance in relation to identity which can be illustrated by the following question: 'Am I a Christian Kurd or a Kurdish Christian?' In other words: does my identity 'in Christ' prevail over my ethnic identity or vice versa? As shown above, the worldview tells which identification will be stronger, the Kurdish identity or the identity 'in Christ'.

In most cases the ethnic identity prevails because the work on the worldview is not accomplished after conversion. This fact is sufficiently illustrated, among many others, by the conflict in Ruanda which led to a tragic fratricide among Christians. Again, we come across the pre-eminent importance of chronological Bible studies to transform the worldview and integrate the cultural systems in order to build up a new identity 'in Christ'.

X Conclusion

We realize that worldview and identity are important concepts to take into account through the process of conversion. The four models presented make the fuzzy concepts of worldview and identity understandable and transformable. Across conversion the transformation of worldview and identity are pre-eminent as the apostle Paul states: 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Rom 12:2).

⁴² Hiebert et al., *Understanding Folk Religion*, 15-30, 73-92.

Rooted and Engaged

Chris Wright

Keywords: Covenant, mission, canon, context, pastoral calling, theological education, contextualisation, preaching

Introduction

It is a privilege to be invited to deliver this keynote address at this ICETE Triennial Conference. The Conference theme: *Rooted in the Word : Engaged in the World*, seeks to capture the double purpose of the *Cape Town Commitment (CTC)*: First, to provide a fresh articulation of our biblical faith in such a way as to show that all mission has its roots in the Bible (Part 1 'The Cape Town Confession of Faith'), and second, to reflect the range of issues, challenges and contexts with which the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town 2010 sought to engage (Part 2 'The Cape Town Call to Action').

Many from the ICETE family took part in that amazing Congress. The Lausanne Movement is committed to world mission. ICETE is committed to global theological education. It is very encouraging that both movements are taking note of each other and recognizing the strong links between them. On

the one hand, the relevance of theological education for mission was recognized in Cape Town and included in the *Cape Town Commitment*, and on the other hand, ICETE has chosen to use the two parts of that document as a broad template for this 2012 Triennial, and to provide all participants with a copy of it.

Part 1 was prepared before, and presented to, the Congress, at the request of Lindsay Brown (International Director of Lausanne), by myself working with an expanded and international Lausanne Theology Working Group. Part 2 was generated and written up during and after the Congress itself, with the help of the Statement Working Group, a group of 8 men and women from all continents.

The *Cape Town Commitment* has been translated into 25 languages so far and is being used as a 'road-map' for the Lausanne Movement for the coming decade. I trust it will be well used in the seminaries and churches represented here at ICETE.

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I Rooted

1. Cape Town Commitment and biblical mission

In what ways does Cape Town Commitment Part 1 'root' mission in the Bible? That is to say, how does its presentation of the core Christian faith bind together our biblical roots with our missional calling and engagement? I believe it does this in three ways.

a) Covenant love, missional faith and practice

Part 1 of the CTC is trying to express our Christian faith in the language of love, to draw attention to what such love actually does—in terms of stating what (or who) is the focus of our commitment of faith (what / whom we believe), and at the same time stating what we will *do* because of that commitment. Biblical love includes heads, hearts and hands: what we affirm in our minds, the commitment of our hearts, and the practical action of our hands.

It might be of interest to know how that framing of Part 1 in the language of love came about. In December 2009, Lindsay Brown convened a conference in Minneapolis to which a representative group of theologians was invited, 18 women and men from all of Lausanne's global regions. Its purpose was to prepare a clear statement of evangelical Christian faith that could serve the global church, alongside a call to action that would emerge from the Cape Town 2010 Congress.

There was extended discussion of the shape of the desired document and the thrust of its content. Some initial but inconclusive drafting was done by

a small committee of the larger group. As the conference came to a close, I was invited to prepare a draft document that would be circulated to the Minneapolis group for comment and revision. I accepted this responsibility with great trepidation.

So it was that I found myself early in January 2010 driving the five hours from London to The Hookses, John Stott's writing retreat cottage in Wales to spend a week alone working on the requested draft. As I drove I prayed in some desperation, 'Lord, how is this thing to be done? How should it be structured? What is the primary, fundamental, message that it needs to carry?' It was as if I heard a voice replying, 'The first and greatest commandment is: 'Love the Lord your God....', and the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Then a whole bundle of other 'love' texts came tumbling into my mind like a waterfall. And I thought, 'Could we frame a statement in the language of covenant love—love for God, for Jesus, for the Bible, for the world, for one another, for the gospel, for mission....?'

As I drove I sketched an outline in my mind, and when I arrived at Hookses, I phoned John Stott, shared what I was thinking, and asked if he thought it could work. He not only thought it could, but strongly encouraged me to follow the idea through. Somehow I felt that if the idea had come from the Lord in prayer, and John Stott agreed, perhaps it was on the right lines!

I spent a whole week on an initial draft, with the headings that you can see in Part 1—all starting with '*We love...*' The draft went through the hands of many theologians and groups

before it was finalized just before the Congress, but that basic structure and flow remained.

And I hope as you scan those headings and paragraphs that you can feel that dynamic flow of love—the love of God for us and through us for the world, and our love for him expressed in the exercise of love in its many dimensions. Here is the opening paragraph. In the document almost every phrase is supported by a biblical text in the footnotes:

Love for God and love for neighbour constitute the first and greatest commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and the first named fruit of the Spirit. Love is the evidence that we are born again; the assurance that we know God; and the proof that God dwells within us. Love is the new commandment of Christ, who told his disciples that only as they obeyed this commandment would their mission be visible and believable. Christian love for one another is how the unseen God, who made himself visible through his incarnate Son, goes on making himself visible to the world. Love was among the first things that Paul observed and commended among new believers, along with faith and hope. But love is the greatest, for love never ends.

We affirm that such comprehensive biblical love should be the defining identity and hallmark of disciples of Jesus. In response to the prayer and command of Jesus, we long that it should be so for us. Sadly we confess that too often it is not. So we recommit ourselves afresh to make every

effort to live, think, speak and behave in ways that express what it means to walk in love—love for God, love for one another and love for the world. (CTC I.1).

This kind of covenantal love claims our minds, wills, emotions and actions. It governs the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains. More simply, it is for our heads, hearts and hands. The language of biblical love binds the *affirmation* of faith and the *obedience* of faith together. Theological education should surely do the same.

b) Canonical survey of Christian doctrine

Here we focus on the constant inclusion of both Old Testament and New Testament texts in the formulation of our convictions—i.e. a fully canonical survey of Christian doctrine.

Many statements of faith that come from evangelical sources tend to major on words, phrases, doctrines, etc., drawn primarily from the New Testament. The *CTC* deliberately tries to be ‘whole Bible’ in the way it articulates the great truths of our faith. An example of this can be seen in the way the following extracts from the paragraphs on God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, include Old Testament texts (again, in the document, each paragraph has copious biblical references in footnotes).

We love God as the Father of his people. Old Testament Israel knew God as Father, as the one who brought them into existence, carried them and disciplined them, called for their obedience, longed for their love, and exercised compassionate forgiveness and patient enduring love. All

these remain true for us as God's people in Christ in our relationship with our Father God. (CTC I.3A)

We trust in Christ. We believe the testimony of the Gospels that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the one appointed and sent by God to fulfil the unique mission of Old Testament Israel, that is to bring the blessing of God's salvation to all nations, as God promised to Abraham. (CTC I.4A)

In the Old Testament we see the Spirit of God active in creation, in works of liberation and justice, and in filling and empowering people for every kind of service. Spirit-filled prophets looked forward to the coming King and Servant, whose Person and work would be endowed with God's Spirit. Prophets also looked to the coming age that would be marked by the outpouring of God's Spirit, bringing new life, fresh obedience, and prophetic gifting to all the people of God, young and old, men and women. (CTC I.5A)

c) The grand narrative structure of the Bible and mission

The use of the grand narrative structure of the Bible is the framework for all our mission, including theological education as part of our mission. It is not just that the CTC proof-texts from both Old and New Testaments, but rather that it tries to express all our doctrinal understanding and our missional engagement within the flow of the great biblical story—from creation to new creation.

The story the Bible tells. The Bible tells the universal story of creation, fall, redemption in history, and new

creation. This overarching narrative provides our coherent biblical worldview and shapes our theology. At the centre of this story are the climactic saving events of the cross and resurrection of Christ which constitute the heart of the gospel. It is this story (in the Old and New Testaments) that tells us who we are, what we are here for, and where we are going. This story of God's mission defines our identity, drives *our* mission, and assures us the ending is in God's hands. This story must shape the memory and hope of God's people and govern the content of their evangelistic witness, as it is passed on from generation to generation. (CTC I.6B)

Similarly, the outline of the gospel in section I.8B makes it clear that the good news of the biblical gospel begins in Genesis, not in Matthew. Accordingly, when it comes to speaking about mission, the climax of Part 1 sets all our mission activity within the framework of God's own mission, from Genesis to Revelation.

We are committed to world mission, because it is central to our understanding of God, the Bible, the Church, human history and the ultimate future. The whole Bible reveals the mission of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of his cross. In fulfilling his mission, God will transform the creation broken by sin and evil into the new creation in which there is no more sin or curse. God will fulfil his promise to Abraham to bless all nations on the earth, through the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, the seed of Abraham. God will

transform the fractured world of nations that are scattered under the judgment of God into the new humanity that will be redeemed by the blood of Christ from every tribe, nation, tongue and language, and will be gathered to worship our God and Saviour. God will destroy the reign of death, corruption and violence when Christ returns to establish his eternal reign of life, justice and peace. Then God, Immanuel, will dwell with us, and the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever. (CTC I.10)

Such a broad narrative rendering of the Bible not only shapes our mission, but also covers the whole structure of doctrines that are usually collated under the heading 'Systematic Theology'. It ought to provide the over-arching framework for our theological curriculum.

I would love to see such a 'whole-Bible approach' become characteristic of all theological education—across all disciplines. We should be learning together to read the Bible as a whole and to root our theology and our practice deeply in the 'whole counsel of God.' We need to help our students see that the Bible is not just an *object* of their study (limited to when they are doing 'Biblical Studies', but the subject of their thinking—about everything. That is to say, the Bible is not just something we 'think about', but rather something we 'think with'. The Bible informs and guides the way we think about everything else—whether in the class-room or in all the rest of life in the world.

We are tempted to multiply the number of bolt-on courses on this or that new issue that has just arisen in the world. Something else becomes 'a

big issue', and we feel we must add a course on it to our already overburdened curriculum, often squeezing out the biblical courses to make room. But of course, as soon as the students graduate and leave college some other 'big issue' will hit them. Now they are stumped because they didn't 'take a course in that subject at seminary'.

Rather, we need to teach people how to *think biblically* about any and every issue that will arise. They need to have learned how to bring every issue into the light of all the key points along the Bible narrative and how to hear the major 'voices' of the biblical canon. The Bible may not have a direct answer (chapter and verse) to the new problem, but systematically shining the light of biblical revelation along the whole sweep of the canon on to the issue, will help generate a response that can have some claim to being 'biblical'.

That's teaching students to bring new contextual issues *to the Bible*. It's equally important to help them wrestle with the issues that arise *from the Bible*.

I'd like to say, 'I have a dream....' At least, I once *had* a dream, which I used to muse upon when I was the principal of All Nations Christian College in the UK. I dreamt of a 'Bible College' which would be exactly and only that—a place where we would teach and study only the Bible together in depth, sequentially from the very beginning, and let everything else flow out of the exegesis, interpretation and application of the biblical text.

Immediately you would be forced not only to be rooted in what the Bible says, but also to be engaged with all the issues that the Bible itself engages with. You would have to deal with cos-

mology, issues of science and faith, the nature of humanity, sex and marriage, the problem of evil, gender relations and disorder, creation care and ecological challenges, violence and corruption, ethnic diversity and conflict, urban development and culture—and that's before you even get past Genesis 1-11.

2. Biblical roots of theological education

Why does the Cape Town Commitment call for all theological education to be re-centred (rooted) in the Bible? It does so quite emphatically twice.

We long to see a fresh conviction, gripping all God's Church, of the central necessity of Bible teaching for the Church's growth in ministry, unity and maturity. We rejoice in the gifting of all those whom Christ has given to the Church as pastor-teachers. We will make every effort to identify, encourage, train and support them in the preaching and teaching of God's Word. In doing so, however, we must reject the kind of clericalism that restricts the ministry of God's Word to a few paid professionals, or to formal preaching in church pulpits. Many men and women, who are clearly gifted in pastoring and teaching God's people, exercise their gifting informally or without official denominational structures, but with the manifest blessing of God's Spirit. They too need to be recognized, encouraged, and equipped to rightly handle the Word of God. (*CTC IID.1.d.1*)

We long that all church planters and theological educators should place the Bible at the centre of their part-

nership, not just in doctrinal statements but in practice. Evangelists must use the Bible as the supreme source of the content and authority of their message. Theological educators must re-centre the study of the Bible as the core discipline in Christian theology, integrating and permeating all other fields of study and application. Above all theological education must serve to equip pastor-teachers for their prime responsibility of preaching and teaching the Bible. (*CTC IIF.4.d*).

So the *Cape Town Commitment* brings theological education into the sphere of Christian mission, and then urges that it should be biblically rooted and centred. Why should this be so? Let me suggest three reasons: the biblical mandate, the global need and the pastoral priority.

a) The biblical mandate

Teaching is integral to the growth and mission of God's people. Teaching, indeed, is included within the Great Commission itself. Theological education (as one dimension of the church's broader teaching ministry), is therefore an intrinsic part of the missional life and work of the whole church. The Bible provides robust support for this conviction.

The Old Testament: 'The Old Testament is the oldest and longest programme of Theological Education.' This remarkable affirmation was made by Professor Andrew Walls in a paper given at the Mission Leaders Forum at the Overseas Ministry Study Centre, New Haven, Connecticut. Throughout the whole Old Testament, for a millennium or more, God was shaping

his people, insisting that they should remember *and teach to every generation* the things God had done ('what your eyes have seen') and the things God had said ('what your ears have heard').

He gave his people the Levitical priests as teachers of the Torah, and the prophets to call them back to the ways of God, and Psalmists and wise men and women to teach them how to worship God and walk in godly ways in ordinary life. When reformations happened in Old Testament time (e.g. under Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, Nehemiah-Ezra), there was always a return to the teaching of God's word. God's people were to be a community of teachers and learners, shaped by the word of God, as we see so emphatically in the longings of the author of Psalm 119.

Jesus: It is not surprising then that when Jesus came, he spent years doing exactly the same—teaching, teaching, teaching his disciples as the nucleus of the new community of the Kingdom of God. Even as a twelve-year-old boy he showed that he was rooted in the scriptures and able to engage with the rabbis in the temple. And in the Great Commission, he mandates his apostles to teach new disciples to observe all that he had taught them. Teaching was at the heart of Jesus mission and ministry.

Paul: The importance of biblical teaching in the missionary work of Paul can hardly be missed. There is his personal example of spending nearly three years with the churches in Ephesus, teaching them 'all that was needful' for them, as well as 'the whole counsel of God', and combining that with systematic teaching in the public lecture hall (Acts 19:8-10, 20:20, 27).

There was his personal mentoring of Timothy and Titus to be teachers of the Word.

There was his mission team, including Apollos whose primary training, gifting and ministry was in church teaching. His curriculum in Corinth included Old Testament hermeneutics, Christology and Apologetics (Acts 18:24-28). And Paul insisted that his own work as a church-planter and Apollos's work as a church-teacher (watering the seed) 'have one purpose' (1 Cor. 3:8). Evangelism and theological education are integral to each other within the mission of the church.

The Bible as a whole, then, highlights the importance of teaching and teachers within the community of God's people—teaching that is rooted in, and shaped by, the Scriptures and which in turn brings health and maturity to God's people and shapes them for their life in the world. So, to be very frank at this point, whenever theological education neglects or marginalizes the teaching of the Bible, or squeezes it to the edges of a curriculum crammed with other things, it has itself become unbiblical and disobedient to the clear mandate that we find taught and modelled in both testaments.

Theological education which does not produce men and women who know their Bibles thoroughly, who know how to teach and preach the Scriptures, who are able to think biblically through any and every issue they confront, and who are able to feed and strengthen God's people with God's Word—whatever else such theological education may do, or claim, or be accredited for, it is failing the church by failing to equip the church and its leaders to fulfil their calling and mission in

the world. That is why the *Cape Town Commitment* makes its strong plea for the re-centring of theological education around the Bible.

b) The global need

The *Cape Town Commitment* goes on to identify several of the most disfiguring aspects of 21st century evangelicalism. As in the *Lausanne Covenant* there is a healthy awareness of ways in which we, as Christians, have failed to live up to our calling. There is confession of failure (in repentance) as well as confession of faith (in affirmation). There is a willingness to look at ourselves, as a global Christian community using the name 'evangelical' and making the claims implicit in that word, and to admit that we are not always particularly attractive in the way we live and behave, and that we simply do not look like the Jesus we proclaim.

When there is no distinction in conduct between Christians and non-Christians—for example in the practice of corruption and greed, or sexual promiscuity, or rate of divorce, or relapse to pre-Christian religious practice, or attitudes towards people of other races, or consumerist lifestyles, or social prejudice—then the world is right to wonder if our Christianity makes any difference at all. Our message carries no authenticity to a watching world.

We challenge one another, as God's people in every culture, to face up to the extent to which, consciously or unconsciously, we are caught up in the idolatries of our surrounding culture. We pray for prophetic discernment to identify and expose

such false gods and their presence within the Church itself, and for the courage to repent and renounce them in the name and authority of Jesus as Lord (*CTC IIE.1*).

We are reminded of the temptations and idolatries of pride, exaggerated success and greed (idolatries which can infect the academy and theological education as much as any other part of the church). And we are called to return to the Christlikeness of humility, integrity and simplicity. We are warned about the damaging poison of the so-called Prosperity Gospel. We are, in short, faced with the short-comings of the contemporary church and the constant need to address them alongside our commitment to active mission engagement.

But what lies behind these areas of failure? Is the moral confusion and laxity of the global church a product of a '*famine of hearing the words of the LORD*' (Amos 8:11)?—the lack of biblical knowledge, teaching and thinking, from the leadership downwards? As in Hosea's day, are there not multitudes of God's people who are left with '*no knowledge of God*'—at least, no adequate and life-transforming knowledge, and for the same reason as Hosea identified—the failure of those appointed to teach God's word (the priests in his day) to do so (Hos 4:1-9)?

Decades ago, John Stott believed that it was this more than anything else that was to blame. And he believed that the key remedy, 'the more potent medicine' as he called it, was to raise the standards of biblical preaching and teaching, from the seminaries to the grass-roots of the churches. Here is an extract of a document I recently found among his papers, dated 1996,

expressing his personal vision for the work of Langham Partnership (which he founded) and the need for it. He pulls no punches and spares no part of the global church in his illustrative samples. And he is crystal clear in his prescription, and prophetically exalted in his vision of a different reality.

Quoting from John Stott:

1. The Ambiguity of the Church

The statistics of church growth are enormously encouraging. But it is often growth without depth, and there is much superficiality *everywhere*. As in first-century Corinth, there is a tension between the divine ideal and the human reality, between what is and what ought to be, between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. Thus the church is both united and divided, both holy and unholy, both the guardian of truth and prone to error.

Everywhere the church boasts great things, and everywhere it fails to live up to its boasts. Its witness is marred by conspicuous failures—for example by litigation in India (Christians taking one another to court, in defiance of the plain teaching of the apostle Paul), by tribalism in Africa (so that appointments are made more according to tribal origin than to spiritual fitness), by leadership scandals in North America (revealing a lack of adequate accountability), by apathy and pessimism in Europe (the consequence of 250 years of Enlightenment rationalism), by hierarchy in the Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures (which owes more to Confucius than to Christ), by anti-intellectual emotionalism in Latin America, and everywhere by

the worldly quest for power, which is incompatible with the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ'.

2. The Word of God

All sorts of remedies are proposed for the reformation and renewal of the church, and for its growth into maturity. But they tend to be at the level of technique and methodology. If we probe more deeply into the church's sickness, however, we become aware of its need for more potent medicine, namely the Word of God.

Jesus our Lord himself, quoting from Deuteronomy, affirmed that human beings live not by material sustenance only, but by the spiritual nourishment of God's Word (Deut 8:3; Mt 4:4). It is the Word of God, confirmed and enforced by the Spirit of God, which effectively matures and sanctifies the People of God.

3. The Power of Preaching.

If God reforms his people by his Word, precisely how does his Word reach and transform them? In a variety of ways, no doubt, including their daily personal meditation in the Scripture. But the principal way God has chosen is to bring his Word to his people through his appointed pastors and teachers. For he has not only given us his Word; he has also given us pastors to teach the people out of his Word (e.g. Jn 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 4:13). We can hardly exaggerate the importance of pastor-preachers for the health and maturity of the church.

My vision, as I look out over the world, is to see every pulpit in every

church occupied by a conscientious, Bible-believing, Bible-studying, Bible-expounding pastor. I see with my mind's eye multitudes of people in every country world-wide converging on their church every Sunday, hungry for more of God's Word. I also see every pastor mounting his pulpit with the Word of God in his mind (for he has studied it), in his heart (for he has prayed over it until it has inflamed him), and on his lips (for he is intent on communicating it).

What a vision! The people assemble with hunger, and the pastor satisfies their hunger with God's Word! And as he ministers to them week after week, I see people changing under the influence of God's Word, and so approximating increasingly to the kind of people God wants them to be, in understanding and obedience, in faith and love, in worship, holiness, unity, service and mission.

c) The pastoral priority

Seminaries exist mainly for the training of future pastors (not exclusively of course, but historically they have been 'invented' to serve the church by training those who will serve in ordained pastoral ministry).

But what should a pastor be able to do? What should a pastor-in-training be trained and equipped for? We should start to answer that question by consulting the list of qualifications that Paul gives for elders/overseers in the churches he had founded which were now being supervised by Timothy and Titus. We find extensive lists of qualities and criteria in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 and Titus 1:6-9.

What is striking is that almost all

the items Paul mentions are matters of character and behaviour—how they live and conduct themselves and their families. Pastors should be examples of godliness and faithful discipleship. Only one thing could be described as a competence, or ability, or skill—'able to teach'. The pastor above all should be a teacher of God's word, able to understand, interpret and apply it effectively (as Paul further describes in 1 Tim 4:11-13; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:1-, 15; 3:15-4:2). In fact the pastor's personal godliness and exemplary life is what will give power and authenticity to this single fundamental task. The pastor must live what he or she preaches from the Scriptures.

So then, if seminaries are to prioritize in their training what Paul prioritizes for pastors, they ought to concentrate on two primary things: personal godliness and ability to teach the Bible. Now of course there are many other things that pastors have to do in the demanding tasks of church leadership. They will need basic competence in pastoral counselling, in leading God's people in worship and prayer, in management and administration of funds and people, in articulating vision and direction, in relating to their particular cultural context etc. But above all else, Paul emphasizes what they must *be* (in godliness of life), and what they must commit themselves to *do* (effective preaching of God's Word).

All that is taught and learned (formally and informally) in seminary should contribute to producing those who can preach the Word. Now immediately I would add, this is NOT to say that the Homiletics Department takes over the curriculum (any more than to say that all that a seminary

does should be 'missional' means that the Missions Department takes over the curriculum)! Rather, it means that every part of the curriculum should deepen, enrich and resource the life and mind and skills of future pastors for their preaching ministry.

When a pastor comes to preach a biblical text, he or she should be able to draw not only on the resources of the biblical exegetical courses they may have done, but also on the riches gleaned from Systematic and Historical Theology, from the lessons of Church History, from the insights and applications of Cultural or Anthropological or Religious Studies. All of this can give depth and breadth to the preaching of the Bible. As Paul Windsor said, in the title of his seminar at the ICETE conference, 'it takes an entire college to raise a preacher'—a preacher who can feed the flock with preaching that is faithful to the biblical text and the historic tradition of the Christian faith, and that is strong and effective in its contextual relevance and application.

The Langham Partnership's Oxford consultation in June 2010 on the teaching of preaching in seminaries issued a document: '*Sixteen Affirmations*'. Here are numbers 5 and 6:

- Learning to preach incorporates a mixture of the formal, or *taught*, dimensions of preaching together with the informal, or *caught* dimensions. What happens in classrooms (right across the curriculum), in the chapel, and in the wider community all contribute to the shaping of preachers. And so we affirm that it takes an entire college, with a united faculty, to ensure the effectiveness of the homiletics course(s)

within the training programme.

- In the majority world anyone who graduates from a theological college is expected to be a preacher. Therefore we affirm that the teaching of homiletics needs to be an indispensable, inter-disciplinary, and integrating exercise at the core of the mission, vision and practice of the institution.

Yet equipping future pastors with that skill of careful, diligent, imaginative and relevant preaching of the Bible seems sadly neglected in many seminaries. Or so it seems from the response I often get when, at a Langham Preaching seminar somewhere I ask participants who I know have already been to a seminary, 'Did you not learn how to preach from Bible passages at seminary?' 'Well,' comes the answer many a time, 'we did have a course called 'Homiletics', but it was just ten lectures on different kinds of preaching. We were never taught how to move from a Bible text to a biblical sermon, or given any practice and assessment in doing it.' Frankly, that points to a tragic abdication of what ought to be a primary responsibility.

II Engaged

I am very aware that I have majored on the 'Rooted in the Word' part of my brief in this keynote address for the Conference theme and that the next section will necessarily be shorter. But I do believe that the more we are rooted in the Word, actually the more we will find ourselves having to engage in the world since the Word itself comes to us embedded in its own context and engaging with all the issues that faced

God's people in both Testaments. If we are preaching an 'engaged Word' we cannot help but take up the challenge of engaging that Word with our own contemporary and varied cultural and missional contexts.

Likewise, if a seminary deliberately seeks to 're-centre the study of the Bible as the core discipline in Christian theology, integrating and permeating all other fields of study and application' (CTC IIF.4.D), then inevitably it will be compelled to address the issues thrown up by the world around it, in the light of the Bible's teaching. If the Bible is the product and the record of God's mission for the sake of God's world, then you cannot be truly and wholly biblical without also being thoroughly missional—in thinking and practice.

'Engaged in the world' is one way of expressing what we mean by 'missional'. A 'missional church' (is there any other kind?) is one that recognizes and acts upon the primary identity and calling of the church to be the agent of God's mission in God's world for God's glory. So when we say that theological education must be 'engaged in the world', we are saying that it must be missional—that is, it must play its full part in serving God's purpose in and through the church for the sake of the world.

It is in this sense that the *Cape Town Commitment* insists that theological education is *intrinsically* missional (that is to say, it constitutes an integral dimension of the full-rounded mission of the church), and therefore it ought to be *intentionally* missional (that is, preparing people for fully engaged mission in the world). Here are the relevant paragraphs:

The mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the Church. Theological education serves *first* to train those who lead the Church as pastors-teachers, equipping them to teach the truth of God's Word with faithfulness, relevance and clarity; and *second*, to equip all God's people for the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God's truth in every cultural context. Theological education engages in spiritual warfare, as 'we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'

Those of us who lead churches and mission agencies need to acknowledge that *theological education is intrinsically missional*. Those of us who provide theological education need to ensure that it is *intentionally missional*, since its place within the academy is not an end in itself, but to serve the mission of the Church in the world.

We urge that institutions and programmes of theological education conduct a 'missional audit' of their curricula, structures and ethos, to ensure that they truly serve the needs and opportunities facing the Church in their cultures. (CTC IIF.4)

Two questions remain, that I cannot answer in depth here but should stimulate further reflection and resolution: Why and How?

1. Reasons for missional engagement

Why must all Theological Education be missionally engaged? The answer to this question follows very similar lines to the answer given above as to why theological education should be biblical rooted. That is not surprising if it is true, as I've said, that to be truly biblical is necessarily to be missional. The teaching ministry within the people of God was never an end in itself but a means towards shaping and equipping God's people for their mission in God's name in the world.

a) Old Testament

Even in the Old Testament you can see this. Israel did not have a 'missionary mandate' to go out to all the nations (in the way that the post-resurrection Jesus sent out his apostles to all nations). But their mission was to live visibly among the nations, as a 'light to the nations', bearing witness to the God they worshipped through the kind of society they were intended to be. Thus, for example, Moses urges the people to follow his detailed teaching in order that the nations would take notice and ask questions (Deut 4:5-8).

b) Great Commission

Most significantly, teaching is included at the heart of the Great Commission itself. How was the mission of making disciples of all nations to be accomplished? Not only through evangelism leading to baptism, but by '*teaching them* to obey all that I have commanded you' (Mt 28:20—a phrase which is in itself essentially Deuteronomic). And if we ask what is implied by the 'all' that Jesus had taught his disciples, it

certainly includes that they should be salt and light in the world, engaged in the work of the kingdom of God, through words and works, preaching the good news about King Jesus, seeking justice, showing mercy and love, practising forgiveness and generosity—and doing so to the ends of the earth until the end of the world. Thus, the teaching task itself, and the obedience of faith that should flow from the teaching, are both essentially missional. Theological education, then, as one formal embodiment of the teaching work of the church, participates in the mission of God as mandated by Christ.

I very much resist the tendency in some circles of separating evangelism and teaching (since they are both essential to the formation and growth of healthy believers and churches), and of using the term 'Great Commission Christians' as implying those whose priority (in strategy or in gifting) is in evangelism. I would say to all of us at this conference—'Theological educators, we *are* 'Great Commission Christians'! We *are* engaged in mission—mission as Christ himself defined it. We are therefore necessarily engaged in the world.'

c) Paul

This is a pattern that we also see in Paul's ministry. He had not stopped 'being a missionary' when he settled in Ephesus for a few years and spent most of his time teaching the churches there, as well as engaging in evangelistic and apologetic work in a public lecture hall. And in an interesting pair of verses in Acts 20 we can see that Paul's teaching was very much rooted in the Word and engaged in the world.

In Acts 20:27 he says that he had

not hesitated to preach to them ‘the whole counsel of God’—which almost certainly means the great sweep of biblical revelation (predominantly what we now call the Old Testament) about the saving mission of God culminating in the cross and resurrection of Christ and ultimately leading to the new creation. He taught them the depth and breadth of the biblical story (as is very evident from the letter written to the Ephesians and the assumptions it makes about what they already knew from Paul’s teaching).

But in Acts 20:20, Paul says he had not hesitated to preach to them ‘whatever was needful for you’—which almost certainly means that he would systematically (‘from house to house’—in the local fellowship meetings around the city) answer whatever questions they raised from their context. There would be all kinds of issues in this newly founded church—such as caused the riot in Acts 19, or the issues of food and meat and sex and money, etc., that we read about in the Corinthian correspondence. These new Christians needed biblical teaching to help them engage with the world around them—and Paul made sure they had that teaching for that missional purpose, often quoting great biblical texts in support.

Paul’s preaching then was both rooted and engaged, both expository of the scriptures and topical in its local relevance. It is an excellent pattern for a biblical preaching ministry.

d) Pastor-Teachers

And it is the pattern that Paul envisaged for all those whom God would give to the church as pastor-teachers. Their whole purpose is ‘to equip his people

for works of service’ (Eph 4:12). So if theological education is to train such pastor-teachers for the task Paul says they have been given for, then it must equip them to go out and be *equippers* of all the rest of God’s people for *their* ministry in the world, in their homes and workplaces and in the whole of their lives. We do not train people for a clerical ministry that is an end in itself, but for a servant ministry that has learned how to train disciples to *be* disciples in every context in which they live and move.

I sometimes say to congregations when I am preaching on a text like 1 Peter 2:9-12, where all God’s people are to be his holy priesthood in the world, ‘I hope you do not think that you come to church every Sunday to support the pastor in his ministry. It is precisely the other way round. The pastor comes to church every Sunday to support *you in your ministry*, which is out there in the world, in the front line of your every day life and work. *You* have the ministry, the mission, where it really counts. You need to be fed and taught and equipped for whole-life discipleship in the world, and it is the pastor’s job to do that. Make sure he does, and pray for him until he does!’ Are we training future pastors to think like that and to shape their preaching and teaching ministry for that goal?

2. Methods of missional engagement

How can all TE be missionally engaged? All I can say at this point is that I am encouraged to have discovered over the past few years a number of seminaries in different parts of the world where they have deliberately sought

to become 'missional'. In some cases this has meant a complete review and re-designing of their curriculum, with the deliberate intention that everything that is taught across all the disciplines, and everything else that happens in the life of the institution, is subjected to the question and criterion: 'How does this contribute to shaping men and women to be missionally engaged in *this* context, in *this* culture, with depth of understanding of the Word (and the Christian tradition of faith and history flowing from it) and of the world, and the ability to relate both to each other?'

It would be a very worthwhile task to collate the experience of a number of such institutions that have made this journey and share it with the rest of the evangelical theological academy so that we become more globally fully biblically rooted and effectively missionally engaged.

III Conclusion

Seminaries seem to swing in two possible directions. One the one hand they may aim at the 'glittering prizes' of the highest academic standards and excellence of scholarship in Biblical and theological disciplines, but with little engagement with the outside world in terms of any missional teaching or in-

volvement.

On the other, they may be passionately concerned for missional impact and engagement, seeking to be 'relevant' over a wide range of social and political issues, but with very slender if any biblical roots, or an ever diminishing attention to deep biblical study and knowledge.

I long to see models of healthy combination of high standards of biblical and theological scholarship with effective contextual engagement—training the future leaders of the church to know how to do both, or rather to know how to equip God's people to grow in maturity and Christlikeness through Bible teaching and to live missionally in the world. But it seems to me that the first has priority, and that indeed *the more biblically rooted we can be, the more we will be driven to be missionally engaged*, and the better equipped we will be to do so. For the more the Bible impacts and informs us, the more the Bible will drive us into the world to serve God there. I like the line in the Micah Declaration, also quoted in the *Cape Town Commitment*,

If we ignore the world, we betray the Word of God, which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the Word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.

Engaging Contextual Realities in Theological Education: Systems and Strategies

Enrique Fernández

Keywords: Exegesis, church, community, philosophy of education, knowledge, governments, transformational learning, integration

Introduction

There has been in recent times a growing interest in understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by theological institutions as they design models and strategies to equip the church to engage the world in contextually relevant ways. Such interest has been enthusiastically welcomed since it supposes the recognition that context is extremely important in the articulation of beliefs and confessions, of mission and identity, of life and practice.

Also, there seems to be in that interest a shared understanding by theological schools and the church that context is crucial in the definition of their purpose for existence. However, it seems that not many theological schools or churches are intentionally

taking into account contextual realities as they design programs, curriculum, or strategies for relevant ministry in the world.¹

On the one hand, theological education has been animated by a pendulous tension between two extremes: (1) the training of students for the critical exegesis of the biblical text and the formal articulation of theological categories to understand God and his interaction with the world, and (2) the training of students for the practical exercise of church ministries. These two approaches, however, most of the times, focus on the individual accumulation of theological knowledge, or on the development of skills to fulfil church responsibilities to her members. In that approach, students study theology for the sake of theology, or end up learning how to preach, conduct funerals, serve in wedding ceremonies, or how to dedi-

1 Theodore Brelsford and P. Alice Rogers, eds., *Contextualizing Theological Education* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 1-2.

cate babies to the Lord.²

On the other hand, the church seems to have lost its original purpose of making disciples for the proclamation of the gospel, and the relevant implementation of the marks of the Kingdom of God in the world. This situation is expressed today by an inward orientation of the church and her focus on the happiness and wellbeing of her members. Prosperity gospel, schools of prophets and apostles, and a marketing mentality to church life and ministry have captivated the church to social popular trends, moving her away from her call and mission.³

The world outside, however, is plagued with structural challenges that demand contextually relevant theological answers. There is in the world today a strong presence of violence, crime, extreme poverty, destitution, and lack of basic human rights. Political systems are volatile; justice is continually compromised, and government initiatives offer only superficial solutions to the pressing problems and demands of local communities.⁴

In the midst of that complex reality the church usually feels inadequate to engage the world with the gospel for two reasons: (1) the challenges of the world seem to her too vast and insur-

mountable and, (2) she is not able to articulate an informed conversation with her local context.

Theological schools also seem to be inadequate in serving the church or in properly engaging the world. They claim as one of their main purposes to serve the church in her ministry to culture and society, but they seldom cultivate a healthy conversation with her or with the world.

To overcome that situation, the church must be able to identify the main challenges affecting her own context, so that she doesn't get lost and frustrated in the midst of many cultural and social demands. She also needs to find ways to meet those challenges with appropriate theological answers. In that process, theological schools can help the church by conducting formal research of her context, providing appropriate interpretation of that context, and designing strategies for engagement congruent with sound theology and relevant application in the world. Theological schools can also help the church by training leaders with contextually relevant programs, curriculum, and systems of learning.

Unfortunately, too often theological schools seem to ignore how to help the church, or how to design programs conducive to a healthy interaction with the world for transformation. Usually, their curriculum and educational systems are adopted or implemented without proper contextualization, and their focus is primarily on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge divorced from any practical application in local realities. With that approach, very often their graduates find themselves without the resources to help the church be relevant in her context.

2 Tracy Schier, *Edward Farley: on the state of Theological Education in the United States*. Interview with Edward Farley, Resources for American Christianity, www.resourcingchristianity.org

3 Arturo Piedra, *The New Latin American Protestant Reality* (Journal of Latin American Theology, 2006, 1 no 1) 42-67.

4 World Bank, *Crime and Violence in Central America: A Development Challenge*. (2011), www.worldbank.org/lac

Despite the assessment mentioned above, there are today signs that point in the direction of hope and excitement, as well as the need to rethink the way theological education is developed in an effort to help the church fulfil her mission to the world. On the one hand, the Lord is very much at work in the world—he is active and present redeeming culture and society through the church and her people.⁵ On the other hand, new research in education can help theological education to be relevant in the world, as well as avoid some common deterrents to sound training of students.

First, there is a healthy emphasis on the creation of contextual learning environments rather than on textbook-oriented, professor-focused education. Second, there are exciting new studies on how adult people learn when immersed in their local realities. Third, there are new philosophies of education based on taxonomies that focus on integration of different dimensions of life and practice, rather than on cognitive hierarchies in the learning process.⁶

How can theological institutions take advantage of those developments? The answer to that question is contextually bound, but there are universal components that may help to see how

that can be accomplished.

I Learning Systems Conducive to Intentional Engagement with the World

Any attempt for theological education to be contextually engaged must start with an intentional revision of important elements, such as its philosophy of education and the process that is followed to design programs and curriculum. This revision must also evaluate the role faculty plays in the process of training and equipping students for relevant ministry to the church. This process must come out of an understanding that the church is, in the end, the primary agent of transformation of culture and society, based on a solid theology derived from the biblical text.

1. Philosophy of education

Of course, describing a proper philosophy of education is beyond the scope of this presentation. However, there are a few elements that must be taken into consideration for theological education to be relevant in the world today.

First, theological education must be based on the affirmation that knowledge is constructed, not transmitted. New knowledge cannot be just ‘transmitted’ or ‘absorbed’ from one person to another. When students receive new information they must process that information, based on their previous knowledge, before they can try to make sense of it. In other words, they must construct a new perspective of reality by assimilating or adapting that new knowledge to what they already know. Although this process can take place in isolation, the richest learning

5 James D. Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 225.

6 L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). Mark Hendrickson, Director of Learning Systems at ProMETA, has adapted Fink's concepts to design ProMETA's philosophy of education, *Transformational Learning* (Greeley, CO: Class Notes, 2012).

experiences occur when new knowledge is socially constructed—when that knowledge is discovered through intentional interaction with the main actors of the context in which that learning is taking place.

This affirmation is of extreme importance for theological education to be contextually transformational, because when education is confined to the individual struggle with bibliographic material, without the corporate assessing of the implication of that material for cultural transformation, its value is very limited.

Second, theological education must learn to avoid the blind adoption of programs and curriculum that serve in one context but are foreign to others. Unfortunately, many emerging theological institutions around the world have yielded to the temptation to borrow programs, philosophy of education, curriculum, and educational systems primarily from schools in the Western world, without proper care for congruence with their local contexts. No doubt these Western schools are worth emulating, but the strength of their success is that they respond to needs and challenges of their own contexts. But contexts are different, they are not static, they are not uniform. Therefore, a simplistic implementation of their systems of education cannot adequately serve in other cultural settings.

Third, a much better approach for theological schools is to base their programs, curriculum, and systems on formal qualitative studies of the realities, needs, challenges, and hopes of their own context. Interviewing church leaders, professional and business people, government officials, university professors, and others will provide accurate

and culturally relevant information of the kind of programs needed to engage culture and society with the gospel. Moreover, a proper discovery of the context would lead to appropriate strategies for engagement.

Fourth, excellent programs and curriculum must help students shape new mental models of reality as well as new ways of interacting with that reality. To help students go through that process, faculty must see themselves as designers of learning rather than teachers charged only with delivering content. The focus, therefore, must be on transformational learning by helping students challenge their current ways of looking at the world, while designing new and innovative approaches to engage that world with contextualized biblical theology.

Fifth, priority must be given to helping students develop a Christian worldview. In a world permeated by disintegration and a gross compartmentalization of truth and life, students must be able to integrate their life with the cosmic and eternal plan of God and his mission to the world. By adopting a Christian worldview students will have a solid platform upon which to build a solid apologetic for the truth of the gospel, as well as a framework for relevant engagement with the world in which they live.

Sixth, contextual theological education must be able to deal with the changing nature of the world and its implications for the ministry of the church. In fact, there is in the world today a tension between *continuous-change* and *discontinuous-change*. Continuous-change is predictable, within a familiar paradigm, and easy to face. Discontinuous-change, on the contrary,

is unpredictable, chaotic, and requires the use of a new set of knowledge and skills to deal with its implications. The recognition of this tension is important, because quite often the church knows how to deal with what is predictable and familiar, but finds herself inadequate when having to deal with what is out of the ordinary, or what requires more than simplistic answers to complex structural problems.⁷

Seventh, theological schools must also learn how to deal with a changing world in their own ministry. As they learn from proper research of discontinuous change in a given context, they must review, evaluate, and modify their programs and curriculum, so that new generations of leaders can be equipped to help the church articulate theological and practical answers to social and cultural problems.

The elements of a philosophy of education mentioned above may be appropriate for cultural and social engagement. However, that philosophy will be irrelevant unless it translates into a fruitful effort to move from just teaching to *transformational learning*.

2. Transformational learning in theological education

Transformational learning aims at dismantling traditional ways of thinking by producing a non-reversible shift in the basic presuppositions a person holds as to how the world works. The main goal of that process is to create learning environments in which teach-

ers and students experience a disorienting dilemma that moves them to explore new, and more fundamental, ways of relating to themselves, others, and the world. Moreover, the goal of transformational learning in theological education is to equip students to develop relational experiences with the cultural and social world in which they live.

To accomplish this, students have to establish a personal process of accompaniment with members of their local community. This involves the sharing of life experiences, struggles, joys, pain, and frustration in a corporate search for answers to real-life challenges experienced in that community. Only when students continually interact with 'the other' and its environment will they come to understand the challenges faced by their culture, as well as to be able to design strategies to help 'the other' transform its context on the bases of biblical theology.

The implementation of a transformational learning approach in theological education, therefore, must be integrated along four main components:⁸

a) Situational factors

Theological education does not happen in a vacuum; students come to school immersed in a reality that shapes who they are, their dreams, challenges, opportunities, presuppositions, and worldviews. Schools themselves live in a real context shaped by culture, local laws, community demands, and even denominational pressures. These situ-

⁷ Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church To Reach A Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 6-9.

⁸ L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

ational factors like it or not, determine the relevance of the training offered to students, as well as the service provided by schools to the church.

In the majority world, situational factors manifest local corporate challenges. In that context most students are trying to study while keeping a full-time job. Most pastors do not have the financial resources to attend a residential school, or the time to enrol in a formal theological program. Also, in many parts of the Majority World theological schools face the challenge of working in violent contexts that threaten their sustainability and the life of their students. Moreover, many schools in the Majority World rely on foreign missionaries as teachers who bring their own financial support, but when they leave, schools struggle to replace their faculty with local professors.

Situational factors are also important because students who are able to go to seminary, away from home, come to school with a commitment to implement in their culture the content of their education. When situational factors are neglected, students go home with vast amounts of information, but that information is quite often irrelevant and inadequate to engage their world in a transformational way.

b) Learning environments.

Cultural and social contexts are not an abstract idea; they are present and concrete realities. Therefore, to be relevant in a local setting, schools must design their programs with an intentional interaction with those who are main actors in the life of the church and the world they want to transform. In this sense, teachers and students must see classrooms and local com-

munity settings as learning environments in which to test and implement the relevance of the learning acquired through readings and assignments.

c) Course content.

Traditionally, course content has been determined primarily by a textbook or a notebook dearly guarded by a professor. While this content may be great reading, its application to real life situations may be very limited, especially when that material has been written to answer challenges and questions pertinent to foreign contexts. Questions of ultimate reality, worldview affirmations, social struggles, pains and joys are locally learned, affirmed, and maintained.

For these reasons, courses must not be based on a blind copy of content developed for foreign contexts. Of course, knowledge is not locally bound; knowledge is universal and can be adapted or extrapolated to different contexts. However, that adaptation and extrapolation must be congruent with knowledge and practices of local cultural setting.

d) Life experiences

Theological education must be transformational to relevantly engage the world. To accomplish this, theological schools must provide for opportunities in which teachers and students can submerge themselves in the world of those they are to serve. The goal in this process is that students and teachers, from the first day in school, engage in a fruitful interaction with those who have the power and resources to promote transformational changes in their community.

The goal is also for teachers and students to experience the pain of those who suffer because of destitution and poverty, to engage in confrontational dialogue with those who promote evil and degradation in culture, and to identify with those who struggle day-to-day to find ways to answer structural, cultural, and social challenges with the truths of the gospel.

In this sense, theological education is more than just the transmission of information about biblical affirmations. Theological education must point in the direction of producing significant transformations as a witness of God's present Kingdom in the church and the world.

To talk about systems of theological education is a worthy effort. However, those systems must translate into actual design and implementation of strategies for fruitful engagement with local realities. The following section is an attempt to identify contextual strategies conducive to positive engagement with the world.

II Strategies Conducive to Positive Engagement with the World

There is usually in education a disconnection between methodology and its application, or between theory and practice. That gap can also be present in theological education, unless there is an intentional commitment to integrate theology with context in a mutually challenging interchange. That is, theology must serve as a platform from which to articulate proper answers to local challenges.

One way to bridge that gap is for theological schools to look for as much

knowledge as they can about the world and the church, about their challenges and needs. That process might seem a very difficult one, given the complexity of the nature and structure of both entities. However, it is possible to conduct a hermeneutical study of the world and the church that will help theological institutions in the design of strategies that meet contextual challenges and needs.

1. Understanding contextual realities as cultural texts⁹

All of us grow and develop immersed in local cultures and societies. As a result, we are shaped by a set of presuppositions we use to understand the world and navigate our reality. When left unchecked, however, these presuppositions may lead us to wrong impressions about the reality of our local context. Very often, moved by news about terrorism, violence, destitution, or crime, we rush to wrong conclusions about the nature and purpose of the world in which we live. As such, usually our perception of the world does not do justice to its purpose as the context in which God is carrying out his plan of redemption. Also, very often, moved by popular disdain against the church, we end up concluding that she has lost all right to represent God in the world.

To overcome these unjust conclusions, on the one hand, theological education must learn to affirm the value and dignity of the world as a product of God's wisdom in creation. It must also develop strategies to relate to the

⁹ See Kevin Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts And Interpret Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

world in ways that promote transformational changes at all levels. On the other hand, theological education must learn how to redeem the purpose of the church as God's partner in his mission to bring the whole of creation back to himself. This process should also include the development of strategies for the church to produce transformational changes in her local settings.

One way to pursue that learning and design of strategies is to interact with the world and the church from four important perspectives:

a) Learn from what is being said *about* the world and the church.

Theological schools must intentionally search for every source of information *about* the cultural, religious, ideological, and other descriptors of the world in which it serves. Bibliographic material, oral traditions, popular conversations, newspapers and reviews can help schools to arrive at informed ideas about the components that shape local cultures and societies.

On the other hand, theological schools should also listen to what is being said *about* the church. That is, how society perceives her ministry and her relevance in the world. Local churches around the world have great respect in society, but in other contexts the church is rejected because of her wrong focus and interests.

While this information may not be enough to arrive at an adequate description of the world and the church, the same is useful to determine what other information would be necessary to understand the world and the church and the context in which they function.

b) Listen *to* the world and the church

A second step of interaction with the world and the church is for theological institutions to listen *to* what the world and the church *are* saying with the goal of being able to 'get into their shoes' and listen to their hearts. This process begins with a simple vulnerability to ask the world and the church, 'Tell me your story, your concerns, your values, your challenges, and your message.'

This approach should reflect the experience of the journalist who is not content with just reporting a tragedy, but who decides to live, even if for a short time, with those who suffer that tragedy in flesh and blood. Many times, theological institutions and churches are content with confining their life and practice to the four walls of a building, listening only to their members or students to affirm and sustain their projects and plans.

However, the world and the church are crying out in search for transformation and redemption. The members of our society know that their culture is decadent and in need of transformation. Wherever we look, whomever we talk to, and whatever conversation we hear—all speak of desperation and frustration. Certainly, the global economy is crumbling down; global warming is threatening to destroy the environment; drug trafficking is exploding; large masses of immigrants look for survival alternatives away from home.

These are challenges that cry for redemption and liberation. It is this state of affairs that should move theological schools to engage the world with compassion and commitment, demonstrating the power of the gospel

to transform personal and structural challenges.

As theological schools focuses on the training of transformational leaders in the service of the church, they must also develop a commitment to ask the church to share with them her challenges, confusion, concerns, and struggles to keep fighting for relevance in a complex world. Certainly, the church doesn't have an easy job in the cultural environments of today. The world of the Spirit is confused with the spirit world; fundamental truth is compromised on the altar of tolerance and triviality; and lifestyles are sold freely in the market of individual choices. This state of affairs must move theological education to converse with the church in search of ways to develop tools and strategies to respond to that complex world.

c) *Speak for the world and the church*

A third step for theological education to interact with the world and the church must be an intentional commitment to learn how to intelligently speak of their value and dignity. This is the approach that looks for what can be redeemed and affirmed of the world and the ministry of the church. On the one hand, global markets are offering job opportunities to people who otherwise would not have opportunities to get ahead in life; new technologies are providing opportunities for people to get training without leaving their local culture. Medical research is discovering new drugs and procedures to treat diseases, and new means of communications are bringing communities into near contact, with the possibilities of mutual benefits.

On the other hand, we can affirm

that the church is still God's messenger of good news for a decaying culture, thousands of pastors and lay leaders are faithful to God's Word and its demands for life and practice, innovative strategies are being implemented by Christian organizations to fight poverty and destitution, faithful believers are showing the possibility of having permanent and committed marriages, and young people are joining humanitarian efforts to impact the world with the values of the Kingdom of God.

An assessment of the values of the world and the church, as exemplified above, must move us to find ways to speak *for* their dignity as agents that God is using to carry out his redeeming plan in our communities.

d) *Talk to the world*

A final step for theological education to be relevant in culture and society is to intentionally raise a prophetic voice in the world. To accomplish this process, programs and curriculum of theological schools must articulate a message of good news in the midst of trouble and crisis, as well as a message of confrontation congruent with the character of God.

Theological schools must also be able to talk to the church, confronting models and tendencies that disfigure its nature and purpose for existence. The prosperity gospel, utilitarian methodologies of church growth, managerial approaches to church sustainability, blind adoption of contemporary approaches to spirituality, and other influences from marketing strategies, or popular culture, must be denounced and confronted with a proper theological understanding of the nature and mission of the church.

2. Looking at concrete realities

Since the needs of the world and the church are very complex in nature, theological education must adopt a multidisciplinary approach to learning and serving.¹⁰ Due to historical tensions, education in general and theological education in particular, has struggled with the disruption of the unity of different disciplines of knowledge to deal with reality. Quite often theology has been understood as a separate discipline, with or without any interaction with other disciplines of knowledge. As a result, those serving in church ministries use theology as the main and only source of information to deal with spiritual things.

On the other hand, Christian professionals, business people, university students, and almost any other church member resort only to knowledge provided by their field of expertise when confronted with concrete challenges in life. Usually, these believers don't interact with the biblical text when having to give an answer to social, professional, or personal demands in their field of responsibilities.

Theological schools, therefore, must adopt an integrative approach that takes advantage of knowledge, skills, and strategies derived from different disciplines and fields of research. This process should advocate for the demystification of social sciences, and for a healthy integration of theology and the truth found in other disciplines of human knowledge.

One of my students is a concrete example of how such a multidisciplinary approach to learning is helping her to adequately engage with her world in a relevant way. In a recent assignment she reported:¹¹

... I graduated as a Biological Engineer at a local university in my country... Though the main field of my profession is the clinical-diagnostic area, for more than six years I have focused on an environmental dimension. I work under the Department for the Conservation of Lake Amatitlán, with the vision to give back to humanity, as quickly as possible, Lake Amatitlán in adequate conditions for its use and sustainable enjoyment, through appropriate management of its basin. Presently, I am in charge of the Division of Environmental Control, leading a team that is composed of eight professionals that monitor the quality of the water in the whole basin of the lake... Contrary to what I was looking for myself, God introduced me to a program (ProMETA) where, within my context, ministry, church, and 'secular' job I am able to apply directly and immediately each one of the truths I am learning.

... The opportunity to apply this knowledge has not only been in the ecclesial settings. As a government worker, and leading a division, I have been able to put into practice the concepts of leadership and teamwork, applying each truth in different circumstances. The opportunity

¹⁰ Craig Ott, and Harold A. Netland, eds. *Globbalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 16-18.

¹¹ A. B. S is a ProMETA student who works for the Guatemalan government as an environmentalist at Lago Amatitlán.

to learn different concepts about communication and interpersonal relationships has helped me to deal with difficult people within an environment where politics is more important than the fulfillment of the institution's mission; where corruption is so evident and where there is no fear of God. We have been able to work as a good team and be an example to other divisions in our institution. I have also been able to remember that my mission is to make disciples wherever I am. Moreover, I have understood that working with natural resources and to seek the restoration of a lake is also part of the mission that as believers we have to expand God's Kingdom and to bring all things under his authority.

The above testimony points in the direction of a theological education that equips leaders to relevantly answer structural challenges in corporate culture.

III Concluding Remarks

To talk about theological education that is contextually engaged is a fascinating topic. Extrapolating from that fascination to the actual design of programs, curriculum, and strategies for proper engagement with the world, however, is a complex and difficult issue.

In this paper I have tried to propose an understanding of the systems and strategies that can help theological institutions interact with the church and the world in relevant ways, with the goal of producing personal and structural transformation of cultural and social contexts. I offer these suggestions with humility, hoping that they may help schools reflect on how their programs, curriculum, or strategies engage their culture and society.

May the Lord help us and our theological institutions to continually evaluate our ministry to the church, so that we may be better agents of transformation in the world, for God's glory and honour.

We Reap What We Sow: Engaging Curriculum and Context in Theological Education

Havilah Dharamraj

Keywords: Exegesis, church, hidden curriculum, null curriculum, Savithri, Bollywood, village

this Tree of Life, making its seed available to the world, here, the village in the background.

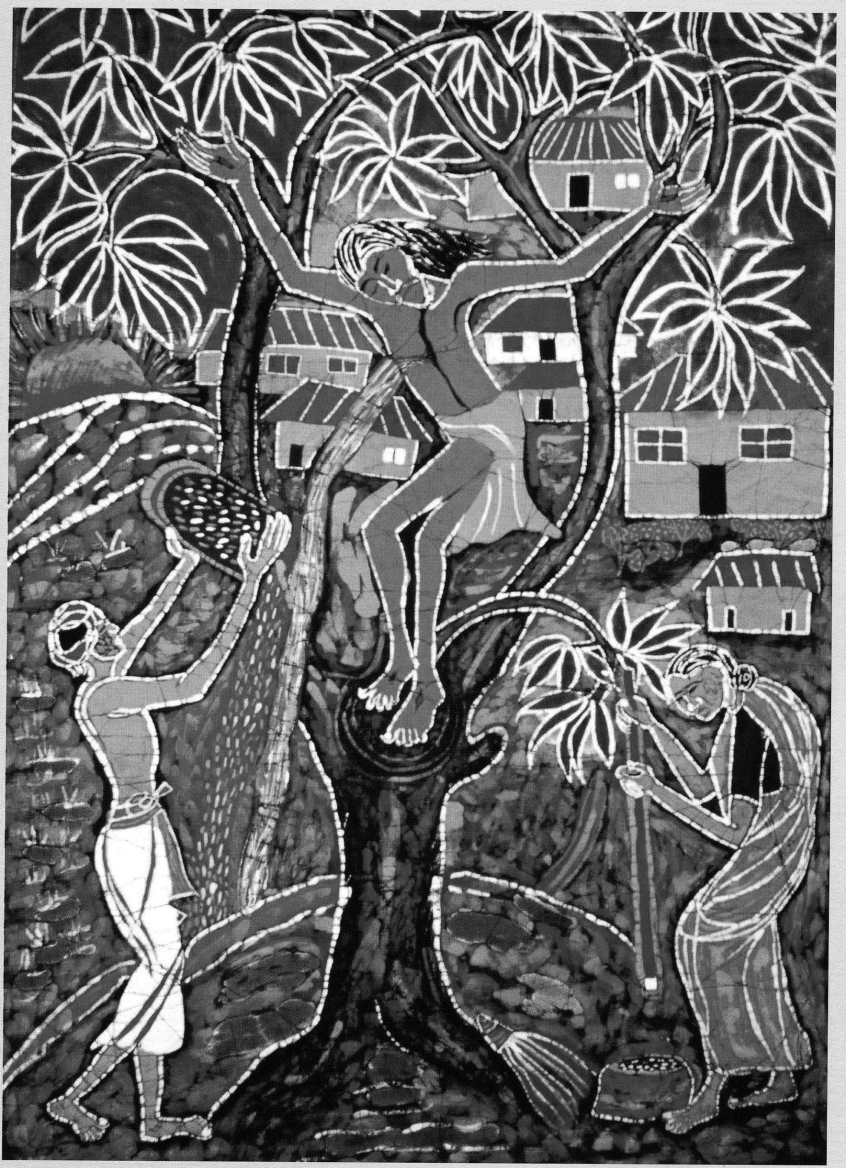
In the countryside near Bangalore (where I live) is an art school, the Indian School of Art for Peace. Two Catholic women artists from a tribal village in South India spent some time here to produce a piece using a traditional technique of painting on fabric. The subject of their art was a local festival in which a certain species of tree is worshipped. Sisters Cecilia and Sebastiana wanted to see if this animistic ritual could be appropriated into the Christian faith. This painting was the result.

The tree is the focus of the artwork just as much it is the focus of the village festival. But, it is Christ who dominates the tree. His arms align the branches into symmetry. His feet are embedded in the trunk, with his heart in a straight line with the heart of the tree. Working under the tree is depicted the community of faith that harvests

I The Curriculum: What We Like to Think We Are Teaching

In keeping with the logo of this conference, we may appropriate this piece of art to make the point on engaged pedagogy, which is the topic of the morning. So, we let the tree represent Christ-centred theological education. On the one end it is firmly rooted. On the other it is engaged with its environment. Its branches spread so that the foliage may catch the sunlight which activates their chlorophyll molecules, and sets photosynthesis going. In this process of food-making, the tree will capture CO₂ and release O₂, simultaneously cleaning up the air. Even while photosynthesis is in process, the tree provides shade to humans, houses birds, and feeds all those who would eat of it.

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The tree exists to serve.

This should be true of theological education—that it exists to serve. The Cape Town Commitment (CTC) formulates the goal of theological education

thus:

The mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the

mission of the Church. Theological education serves *first* to **train** those who lead the Church as pastors-teachers, equipping them to teach the truth of God's Word with faithfulness, relevance and clarity; and *second*, to **equip** all God's people for the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God's truth in every cultural context.

The instrument by which this desired training and equipping occurs is the curriculum. 'The theological curriculum, comprehensively understood, embraces all those activities and experiences provided by the school to enable students to achieve the intended goals. More narrowly understood, the curriculum is the array of specific activities (e.g., courses, practical supervised ministry, spiritual formation experiences, theses).' When the comprehensive and the narrow senses are taken together, 'the entire curriculum should be seen as a set of practices with a formative aim.'¹

From the CTC, our 'formative aim' is to train and equip towards 'the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God's truth in every cultural context.' *Relevantly...in every context*. If we were asked whether we were doing this in our institutions, we would probably answer largely in the affirmative. Of course we are turning out graduates who are relevant to the church specifically, and to society at large. That is *what we like to think we are teaching*: contextually engaged pedagogies. Let us take stock using two well-known categories. We will use the category of the *null curriculum*

to critique our respective institutions' curriculum in the narrow sense, and the category of *hidden curriculum* to appraise it in the comprehensive sense.

II The Null Curriculum: What We Don't Teach

Contextually engaged pedagogies, we understand, are marked by the classroom interacting with the 'real world.' Let us approach this idea through the painting.

The artists freeze the two figures in postures that communicate energy. The man braces himself with his back foot; his arms are held high to let the wind catch the seed he winnows. The woman leans into her task of pounding the seed. Her knees flex in synchrony with the up-and-down movement of her arms. Even without looking down at the mortar, she can aim the pestle accurately.

It does remind us of ourselves in class, does it not? The energy flows effortlessly when we communicate. If it is familiar material, we can keep at it with scarcely a glance at our teaching notes. Powerpoints glide down the screen in synch with the words rolling off our tongues. It's all solid scholarship—informative, instructive and sometimes, even entertaining.

The place where the gap shows is the *null curriculum: what we don't teach*. Let me explain with an example. Our one-year pre-MTh programme in Old Testament ends with Hebrew exegesis of the book of Ruth. When a colleague taught it, he did a great job with the standard narrative critical tools. The students learned to critique the book as pro-Davidic propaganda; they examined how differently the book functions

1 ATS Commission Standard 4, section 4.1.2.

in the Christian canon (after Judges) as compared to the Jewish canon (sometimes after Proverbs). They appreciated the whole slew of narrative devices that make the book the literary gem it is.

Later, when another colleague and I co-taught it, we intentionally curried up the flavour. We opened with a viewing of Deepa Mehta's critically acclaimed movie *Water*. The story is set in the sacred city of Varanasi on the banks of the Ganges. The belief is that Hindus who die there are released from the karmic cycles of reincarnation into eternal bliss. This is enough reason for families from across the country to offload their widows onto its streets, families that consider widows an economic liability. The plot follows the events in a home for widows, taking head-on the oppressive structures of patriarchy that force young widows into prostitution, questions Hindu hermeneutics of scriptures that condemn child widows to these hell holes, and peels back the layers of so-called Indian tradition to expose the hypocrisy and exploitation that underlies them.

Into this scandalous account of the 21st century Indian Hindu widow, we located the text of the book of Ruth. At once, the episodes of the story shook themselves, like pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope, into a whole new pattern immediately recognizable to the Indian eye. It didn't take much explanation to understand why three widows 'lifted up their voices and wept' on that road to Bethlehem; why Naomi should be so embittered against Yahweh as to spitefully rechristen herself Mara; why Boaz repeats his instructions to his workers to leave Ruth alone; why Naomi and Ruth should attempt a night-time trick

on the unsuspecting Boaz; why the womenfolk celebrate Naomi bouncing the boy baby Obed on her knee.

After we had studied the book of Ruth, we discussed its use in popular preaching and teaching. Again, we approached this task with a contextual circumlocution. We first read together the story of *Savithri* embedded in the Indian 4th century AD Sanskrit epic called the *Mahabharata*.² Savithri is the proverbial model wife, a household name. Like a female Orpheus, she breaches the boundary between the over and underworlds. With silver-tongued argumentation she traps the god of Death into releasing life back into her dead husband. Young Indian women are exhorted to be wives like Savithri—humble, obedient, self-effacing, devoted. We then noted how the character Ruth is often contoured similarly in India, whether by male preachers or by women leading small study groups.

So, we re-evaluated Savithri and Ruth to generate a second list of their virtues. We could list that these women were determined, hard-working, resourceful, articulate; they were survivors. Given this, it was remarkable that Indian Christian readers of Ruth routinely selected as praise-worthy and prescriptive the first list rather than the second. Was their reading of Ruth socio-culturally conditioned by the traditional reading of another feisty protagonist, Savithri?

With the aid of Bollywood advocacy and a time-honoured tale, we contextualized our exegesis and reading of the

² With over 200,000 verse lines, it is roughly ten times the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined.

book of Ruth. Borrowing from the theological educator Brent Strawn, I point out that, the direction of contextualization was the reverse of the usual, at least, to begin with.³ The students did not leave the classroom for the 'real world.' The 'real world' entered the classroom in the form of artefacts relevant to the topic under study.

Initially, some of the students in that class were rather taken aback at these artefacts. What has a bible school to do with popular culture or worse, with the sacred texts of Hinduism? Perhaps even a small minority of my colleagues would ask that question. However, the students quickly saw the value. The artefacts served as a matching sample of our 'real world' that we could lay alongside our sample of biblical text. As we expected, the two samples vigorously quarrelled with each other in places. But, they agreed with each other at other places—sometimes directly, sometimes through layers of nuances—reinforcing each other's voices in harmonies that surprised and delighted.

Before long, student voices worked their way in. Significantly, this took the conversation out of the classroom into the 'real world,' or more properly, 'real worlds.' The flow of contextualization was now outward. Students located themselves in their specific circumstances as they contributed to the conversation on wives and widows.

One spoke from a small town in a

developing state, where even Christian communities regarded widows as inauspicious and restricted their presence at auspicious ceremonies such as weddings; one spoke from his own middle-class family situation, admitting that he had relegated his intelligent and capable wife to the traditional tasks of rearing children and keeping house; one spoke from his large, prosperous Methodist church confessing that the care of widows in the congregation was rather non-existent; two spoke from the largely Christian north-east India to say how sensitive and supportive their communities were with widows, perhaps more because of their traditional tribal sensibilities that were now undergirded with biblical prescription; and so on.

Before the class ended, contextualization had happened through a series of dialectics. The artefacts that brought the real world into the classroom became the vehicles by which the class moved into parallel Indian realities. The happy dividend was that these realities robustly engaged with each other as students commented on and learned from each other's experiences. The even happier dividend was that students learned that theology 'encompass[es] entities far beyond actual speech about God'⁴ and can segue with surprising ease between the questionable dichotomies we create of sacred and secular.

Yet, contextualization could not be complete if it had stopped there; if it stopped with students who had only cognitively engaged the classroom

3 See Brent A. Strawn, 'Contemporary (Pop-) Cultural Contexts and the Old Testament Classroom,' in Theodore Brelsford and P. Alice Rogers (eds), *Contextualizing Theological Education* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 146-47.

4 Strawn, 'Contemporary (Pop-) Cultural Contexts,' 146.

with the real world. Several months after those students graduated, two of them told us that they were teaching the book of Ruth in small group bible studies in their churches, as an exercise in Christian formation. Another was making plans for his wife to pursue a career.

The module had (in one manner or another) relocated from the seminary into the constituency it was meant to serve, completing the interlocking process of contextualization. The classroom had engaged the 'real world'; the 'real world' was now engaging classroom learning. The process had been launched by two artefacts we decided to incorporate into the course: a Hindi movie and a piece of Hindu sacred literature.

Our present curricula may demonstrate that we are experts with the winnowing implement, we can employ the mortar and pestle with dexterity, and we know when the broom comes in handy. But surely, there is material we ignore, there are topics we minimize, there are pedagogical practices we wouldn't want to sacrifice lecture time on, there are perspectives we don't even know exist. Our course outlines are the manifesto of what we think is critical to the Christian faith, and its practice and ministry.

So, if we want engaged pedagogies, it helps to consider what we *don't* use when we teach. Or even, what we don't offer on our course listing. Perhaps our MTh students need greater exposure to sociology, psychology and cultural anthropology, irrespective of what their narrow specializations may be. Only experimenting will tell what works best for our specific institution with its particular constituency. And, one

successful experiment often leads to another, and can contagiously spread from one department to another.

What is more, our students invariably teach as they have been taught—so our engaged pedagogy will multiply exponentially as graduates take it with them into the 'real world.' Developing such pedagogies is labour-intensive and time-consuming, but it may prove fruitful beyond our expectations.

III The Hidden Curriculum: What We Don't Realize We're Teaching

The stated purpose of contextually engaged pedagogies is often that students need to learn and practice 'thinking theologically,' or 'as Chris Wright prefers, 'thinking biblically.' The ICETE Manifesto unpacks it like this: to 'inculcate a pattern of holistic thought that is openly and wholesomely centred around biblical truth as the integrating core of reality.'⁵

The Candler School of Theology, Emory University, intentionally overhauled its contextual education programme in 1998, so that its students would be able to do just this: 'think theologically.' One of Candler's faculty, Theodore Brelsford, has useful insights into what such thinking may entail. Here, thinking is not restricted to the standard paradigms of problem-solving and information processing.⁶

⁵ ICETE Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education, 3rd edn, 2002.

⁶ Theodore Brelsford and John Senior, 'Theological Thinking as Contextual Practice,' in Theodore Brelsford and P. Alice Rogers (eds), *Contextualizing Theological Education* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 42-47.

These are paradigms that often dominate our curricula as much as they do contemporary educational theory.

Thus, in a typical exegesis course, the emphasis can fall on solving the problem of translating this or that piece of text to the satisfaction of existing evidence, or exegeting this or that biblical passage to the satisfaction of the principles of good hermeneutics. On the other hand, courses can become centred around data processing.

A course on Introduction to the Old Testament may require no more than that the student absorbs data from the fields of history and archaeology, reads some Old Testament text, studies themes through the Old Testament and correlates all this information in a researched essay. As an afterthought we might require that the essay concludes with a paragraph or a page on 'application' of the topic. The proportion between theory and application immediately signals to the student that processing theory is the greater challenge, application is a natural corollary.

Brelsford urges that theological thinking must go well beyond these paradigms of problem-solving and data-processing. 'Theological thinking,' he asserts, 'entails uncovering functional *assumptions* about God in ourselves, others, and institutions in order to consciously reform those assumptions in the context of a particular community of theological reflection.'⁷ There are two key concepts here.

First, the idea of *functional assumptions*:⁸ In our college we have

a recently started programme called Context Based Learning. In this programme, MA students are required to intern at a ministry placement, which could be a church, a para-church organization or an organization serving social concerns. Students and their assigned faculty facilitators meet formally once a month.

One student was placed in a church where he was required to preach and teach. He was a first-generation Christian from a Hindu background, and had been introduced to the faith in the charismatic tradition. As such, teaching and preaching on the theme of prosperity was familiar ground. However, in the new context of MA intern, where he was required to think theologically, he said he was catching himself puzzling over why good believing Christians in his congregation were not materially prosperous. I wondered aloud that he might be attempting to force-fit one of his assumptions about God onto a reality that was resisting that assumption. Functional assumptions about God, about God's word and about God's world—these are what theological thinking must consciously reform or reconstruct. How best may such reconstruction be done?

This brings us to the second key concept in Brelsford's definition of theological thinking: the idea of a *community of theological reflection*. 'Theological thinking is necessarily a communal process,' he says.⁹ Here he makes reference to the work of the anthropologist Gregory Bateson who applied the terms 'mind' and 'intelligence' to as unusual an entity as an ecological

⁷ Brelsford, 'Theological Thinking,' 44-45.

⁸ An assumption on which one lays the weight of practice.

⁹ Brelsford, 'Theological Thinking,' p. 46.

system, such as a pond or a forest. A certain kind of intelligence emerges in any given organic system, more so in human social systems.

The idea of ecologies of thinking is readily imported into educational theory and applied to the communities that populate classrooms and institutions.¹⁰

Ideas and ways of thinking emerge in a collective that are shaped by the unique persons and relationships within them and the environment around them, similar to the ways that ideas and patterns of thinking emerge in an individual—shaped by the individual's unique genetic composition and experiences and social and environmental location.

This is the ethos in which individuals can best learn to think theologically, it is the ecology within which to repair faulty assumptions. The ICETE Manifesto endorses this thus: 'It is biblically incumbent on us that our programmes function as deliberately nurtured Christian educational communities.'

The monthly Context Based Learning meetings I mentioned are one such sub-community or sub-ecosystem where a mix of students and faculty engage their minds. In several exegesis modules we have used an assignment that requires each student to do a Bible study. The student must convert a biblical text we have exegeted in class into a bible study for a small group of

student wives. Our college is a residential one, and everybody has at least nodding acquaintance with each other. But, students and student wives rarely group together to discuss anything that happens in the classroom. So, this assignment intentionally creates opportunity for an ecology of thinking that doesn't naturally exist on our campus.

The brief is that the students must transfer classroom learning into this lay audience as smoothly as possible—the presentation must lose none of the theological depth plumbed in class, but must be clean of technical jargon, and must use Hebrew only if it adds specific value. Half the time is for the presentation, and the other half is reserved for discussion. It is interesting how challenging this exercise is to some students.

Just as interesting is the discussion generated by the group of student spouses. Their questions are often bouncers (to use terminology from cricket), their direction catching the student by surprise; their insights into the text are sometimes more acute and accurate than the student's; and they might raise brilliantly pertinent issues that did not even occur to us in the classroom. Later, when we debrief with the class on this experience, they ruefully admit that some of their assumptions have been damaged, and they have some ideas now for how to reconstruct those assumptions. Theological thinking is happening here.

Another example of an ecology we intentionally created is a non-graded course requirement in which the class periodically met in a place other than the classroom. To use an ecological analogy, this would be akin to moving all the residents of a pond into a run-

¹⁰ C.A. Bowers and David J. Flinders, *Responsive Teaching: An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture and Thought*, Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series 4 (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 199.

ning stream and observe what changes happen. Daily in the classroom, we studied Genesis 1-11—mostly a cognitive exercise. Privately, every day, the class used a series of devotions on Genesis 1-11 that a student from an earlier batch had written up. This served as gateway into the affective and behavioural dimensions of engagement with the text.

On Fridays, we met in the chapel meant for small groups, a round room up under the dome. It has no furniture other than a few options for seating—low chairs, cushions on the floor—and on one wall, a rough wooden cross. In this environment, so different from the classroom, the ‘mind’ that emerged had both continuity and discontinuity with the ‘mind’ that had dominated the classroom. We picked up themes that we had scarcely noticed in the classroom—the theme of death, for example, that sits coiled at the base of so exuberant an account of the creation of life. We shared thoughts about the loss of loved ones, some very recent.

It was theological thinking that could not have happened in the classroom. Similar stimulative assembling of sub-ecosystems can happen when faculty team-teach a course, or when interdisciplinary courses bring students from different departments together.

To return to the picture: The two workers in the picture, we know, represent a larger community. Harvesting is in part an individual endeavour, but more a communal activity. Men and women work in tandem from dawn to dusk to get this seasonal task completed. It is an analogy for what we have been speaking about—thinking theologically in a community. We note in the

picture that the artists have clearly differentiated male activities from female activities. Winnowing, they explain, is traditionally man’s work. The woman has swept up the seed with her broom, which we see resting at the base of the tree. She is now pounding the seed into meal. ‘This is woman’s work,’ says one of the artists. ‘She is making the seed into food.’

That brings us to what is called the *hidden curriculum: what we don’t realize we’re teaching*. It is in community learning that the hidden curriculum becomes more manifest, than in, say, online learning. To quote Brelsford again: ‘Ways of thinking emerge in a collective that are shaped by the unique persons and relationships within them and the environment around them.’

Let me give examples of hidden curriculum that might catch your notice in my institution. At lunchtime every day, a meal is served for the community at the dining room. You may find yourself sitting between a gardener and a student with the principal across the table from you. Everyone eats together—the service staff, students, administrative staff and faculty. This is unusual in a country in which caste still determines who may eat with whom. We have heard from alumni who have carried this practice back into their institutions as a statement of equality in Christ.

Then, you might notice that the all the manual labour is done by the hired hands. The students devote themselves to academics, as distinct from some other seminaries in India, where the students might also tend the gardens, clean the common areas, and assist in running the kitchen. Might you gather from this that SAIACS does not promote the dignity of labour? And, in

a culture where caste used to determine who did what for a living, might SAIACS be sending mixed signals: yes, we eschew caste by eating together; and yes, we endorse caste by demarcation of labour.

There is a whole range of environmental factors that affects the theological thinking that emerges in a collective. The tone the head of the institution uses with the security man at the gate; the time the course instructor takes to return assignments, and whether the assignments are annotated sufficiently; the tenor of debate in a forum where papers are presented; whether anyone bothers about students attending chapel; how much chapel uses, say, Hillsong, compared to ethnic traditions of praise and worship.

Suppose we had our graduating students writing up a list of ideas and assumptions formed while at our institution which they were not formally taught. We might be both pleasantly surprised and taken aback to discover what we—as an institution—contributed to their theological thinking, and thus, to their character formation, without intending to.

IV To Sum Up: We Reap What We Sow

To sum up: We have considered what an engaged pedagogy entails at two levels—the levels of the narrower and wider senses of the term curriculum. The narrow sense concerns the defined practices the institution provides. Since the classroom is the chief locus of these practices, we have looked at how the classroom may engage with context, paying attention to *what it does not teach*. The comprehensive sense of

the term curriculum takes into its ambit the environment and ethos of the institution—what is sometimes called ‘the spirit of the place.’ We have observed that this constitutes an ecology of learning. The institution must check *what it is teaching below the level of intentionality*, and carefully recalibrate and reconstitute this ecology.

In colder climate zones, most trees are deciduous—that is, they shed their leaves in winter. They do this to survive the hostile environment. The branches are bare and gaunt, seemingly as dead as driftwood. Only the tree knows it is not dead. It has powered down into compatibility mode, keeping to bare minimum activity till it can tide over the winter. Sap still flows but is now restricted to channels around the core. Growth still happens, but only in adding a dense narrow ring to the girth. The tree would insist that it is alive and growing. We would concede that it is just about alive and just about growing.

I wonder if our seminaries are similarly deciduous trees in compatibility mode. Maybe we have surrendered engagement with the world. The world is bewilderingly chaotic—it whips the leaves off our branches. It is frighteningly hostile—it freezes the sap in our twigs. So in defence, we retreat into ourselves. As this generation heads into an increasingly cold and seemingly endless winter we seminaries congratulate ourselves that we are survivors; still pumping sap, still throwing a ring or two of growth. Engagement with the world is too much of a risk, and even if not so, far too much trouble. We are a tree that survives and that’s what matters; never mind if we are not a tree of life.

Think about it. A leafless tree is not without beauty. But how much more attractive a tree which brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaves also do not wither! How much more attractive,

how much more *complete*, how much more *alive*, how much more engaged in service. What are our seminaries going to be, deciduous or evergreen? We harvest from what we sow.

Not Living on Bread Alone: Theological Education as Prophetism

Myrto Theocharous

Keywords: Fertility cults, secularity, evangelicalism, authority of Scripture, comfort talk, context, ministry

I Introduction

Recently I asked my friend Rene Futi Luemba, a minister from Kinshasa, Congo, to tell me what he thinks evangelical theological education should look like. He said: 'The aim of theological education must be to produce prophets.' His reply was profound and demanded to be unpacked. Theological colleges should be 'schools of prophets', 'bands of prophets' or 'sons of prophets'—characterizations taken from the earliest stages of prophecy in Israel during Samuel's, Elijah's and Elisha's times.

However, prophecy in the Old Testament was not static. Throughout Israel's history the voice of the prophets accompanied God's people in the best of times and the worst of times. It critiqued, challenged, condemned but also empowered, comforted and healed. Prophets took God's revelation

seriously; they took God's people seriously; but they took their ever-changing context and how God worked in the unfamiliar, hostile surrounding world just as seriously.

Today it is their writings, a rich and varied legacy of prophetic tradition contained in the whole of Scripture, which continue to be *our* theological educators. If our institutions are to train prophets, what are some of the areas these prophets are to be trained for (and by prophets I do not just mean preachers but also counsellors, youth pastors and Sunday school teachers)?

II Alerting the Church to 'Fertility Cults'

St. Paul in Romans 1:25 said that humanity 'exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator.' This is essentially how fertility cults work. 'Since the success of agriculture and husbandry was the primary necessity upon which all else depended, it

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was natural that the earliest societies in the Near East associated the divine with the productivity of the land.¹ In such cases then, objects of welfare are the source of life and the deity becomes the *means* to that desired end. The deity is thus manipulated through magic, rituals and incantations in order to secure the people's desired goals.

In Greece we no longer worship suns or rivers. Our fertility cult has taken a more contemporary form. You may be familiar with a variety of fertility cults in your context, but ours is called secularity with a special emphasis on capitalistic endeavours; at least this has been the emphasis until the economic crisis hit like a tsunami and caused people to start reconsidering these values.

Although secularity is known by its rejection of the divine, when the church adopts it, it does not necessarily throw out its beliefs in the transcendent. The church is able to adapt its doctrine to a secular mindset, and indeed there are multiple secularities in the world today. The God of the church may be permitted to remain seated in our pews and to adapt to our secular way of thinking and being. But why do I call secularity a 'fertility cult'? Charles Taylor comes close to describing secularity as a 'fertility cult' in his book *A Secular Age*:

I would like to claim that the coming of modern secularity in my sense has been coterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. I mean by

this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing.²

The lack of allegiance to anything beyond 'bread,' i.e. human welfare or flourishing, is a point characteristic of the fertility cults of old despite the fact that means of flourishing are deified or that deities are used as *means* to the desired end of flourishing. Christianity *does* value human flourishing but there remains a fundamental tension. As Taylor says, 'Flourishing is good, nevertheless seeking it is not our ultimate goal.'³ A concern about this allegiance to flourishing is also expressed in the *Cape Town Commitment*:

[L]ike Old Testament Israel we allow our love for God to be adulterated by going after the gods of this world, the gods of the people around us. We fall into syncretism, enticed by many idols such as greed, power and success, serving mammon rather than God. We accept dominant political and economic ideologies without biblical critique.⁴

The church is often unaware that its allegiance has shifted, that it is beginning to mirror the secular society because its 'evangelical' rhetoric is usually maintained. The 'spoken' allegiance differs, but the 'acted' allegiance is often the same as that of the secular world. Prophets are thus to be educated in reflecting on the ways of

1 Joseph P. Healey, 'Fertility Cults,' *ABD* 2:792.

2 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 18.

3 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 18.

4 *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (The Didasko Files; Bodmin, UK: Lausanne Movement, 2011), 11.

society and the church and developing the ability of social and religious critique.

However, even the institutions within which prophets are trained are not immune. In Greece, as I am sure in many other countries, the majority of churches believe in lay service. No salary is offered to a theological education graduate. Very few exceptions may be made for popular preachers, but generally speaking, most ministers are tent-makers. When it comes to women, of course, there are almost zero opportunities for hire in ministry. Under these circumstances, not only is there no time for theological education for these pastors who have to balance maintaining a job, pastoring and caring for their families, but also for young people, who are at the point of considering a career, there is lack of motivation for theological education and ministry. It appears as if one does not require the other.

Even in the context of churches who *would* offer a salary to pastors, we often have a hard time recruiting students to be trained for such ministry. Theological education can simply not compete with other career options one is considering. Theological institutions could not possibly advertise that the economic and prestigious paybacks that theological education offers can outweigh the acquisition of those benefits from another source. I often meet Christian parents who discourage their children from pursuing theological studies since this field would never measure up to the more profitable and prestigious careers their children could have.

But this phenomenon is not limited to the European context. Ele-

wani Farisani mentions the words of a former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, who has on numerous occasions discouraged young South Africans from enrolling for Biblical Studies. He said, for example: 'If you qualify and come out of teacher training, for instance, with Biblical Studies you are not going to get very many jobs for that.'⁵ Farisani says that Mbeki regards Biblical Studies, and by extension Theology, as disciplines that 'are not readily marketable except in teaching.'

In the secular capitalistic world, people have a limited amount of time and money and their interest is to invest them in the place that would generate most capital (both economic and social). Therefore, apart from those who claim to have a personal clear calling to this 'leap of faith' called theological education, prospective students turn down even the minimum of one year of theological studies.

Please note that we are not critiquing the most basic natural need of humans to earn their 'bread'. We are critiquing 'living on bread *alone*.' There is a very thin line between the two. Secular values can be so subtle and may convince us that we are *starving*, that we in fact do not *have* bread, thus making the pursuit of theological education appear as an act of *suicide*, blinding us to its life-giving benefits for the spiritual lives of our church communities.

The prophet Amos comes to mind, whose 'bread-earning' was disturbed

⁵ Elewani Farisani, 'Impact on New Policy Developments in Higher Education on Theological Education,' *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 36 (July 2010): 291.

for a risky, but nevertheless, higher cause. Yes, prophets may often find themselves taking a 'leap of faith' into the unknown, making great sacrifices, abandoning the nets and following a rabbi who Himself had nowhere to lay His head.

But for what purpose? Why such sacrifice? In order to preserve the *meaning* of our existence, a life beyond 'bread.' We need arts, we need literature, we need the humanities, but above all we need theology, His word, for this is what gives meaning to our existence. In our secular world with its 'fertility religions' it will take sacrifices to preserve this meaning and pass it on to the next generation.

Theological education must go on even if no one is willing to pay for it. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die,' and we do not hide this reality from our prophets. We teachers often collect money to support a student who took that leap of faith. Prophets will understand other prophets because they are the first ones to see the value of this sacrifice. Solidarity is expected not only among individual prophets but among schools of prophets. We must devise ways of helping each other and sharing the burden of preserving this treasure that has been handed down to us.

III Exposing the Church's Pious Talk

It is often difficult for the church to discern when they are 'living on bread *alone*' because they *talk* about their reality as if living by 'every word that comes out of God's mouth'. It is an image constructed by 'comfort talk' that

does not always correspond to the reality it describes. Prophets are trained to discern this 'pious talk' as Isaiah does in 29:13: '...this people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me.' It is amazing how he was able to perceive that even with the cult functioning regularly!

This mode of existence is very subtle because the way of the church may be indistinguishable from the secular way but the manner in which the church interprets her life, thoughts and choices is dressed in 'pious talk'. One example from my Greek context is how the *Sola Scriptura* principle is used by evangelicals to define themselves over against the Greek Orthodox. The principle becomes a distinctive of identity rather than an expression of the church's practice.

The reality is that there is hardly found a *Sola Scriptura* church with serious scriptural catechism for all its members, but even when a church attempts to provide such programs, they are only successful if they do not interfere with our 'bread' pursuits. Moreover, only a tiny minority would regard theological education as indispensable to being 'evangelical,' even an 'evangelical pastor.'

'Comfort talk' is also active in the Greek Orthodox tradition which uses its doctrine of eucharistic unity in communion to define itself over against protestant denominationalism. However, on the ground, and especially in the Greek context, the situation does not correspond to the romantic realities this doctrine describes. The Orthodox church is fragmented between vocal fundamentalist and nationalistic groups opposing others of a more ecu-

menical orientation.⁶

The role of the prophets is to subvert the church's 'comfort talk' by pointing out the dissonance between life and doctrine. The wealth of scriptural examples of the prophets' subversion is astonishing. The New Testament prophet, John, in Revelation 3:17, reveals the dissonance between the church's self-perception and the actual reality: 'For you *say*, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.'

In Amos' time the eschatology of the expected 'Day of the Lord' was used as 'comfort talk' instead of transforming Israel's lives in anticipation of such a day. Amos scrapes the surface of this pious talk and reveals the inconsistency between their life and eschatology.

Jeremiah in his temple sermon criticizes their *chatter*: 'Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord' (7:4). A precious and holy place ordained by God had become the very thing that deceived them into false security. It had become an identity marker that had substituted the reality it was meant to signify.

Richard S. Briggs uses Jeremiah's sermon and substitutes the temple

by scripture. He writes: 'This is the Scripture of the Lord, the Scripture of the Lord, the Scripture of the Lord.' The implied shock would be worthy of Jeremiah's temple sermon.⁷ What is condemned in this Jeremiah-like critique is the reliance not on Scripture's teachings, but on using the doctrine of Scripture as an identity marker that would offer one false security.

In 2007 in Budapest Chris Wright said: 'My big concern is not just that the world church should become more evangelical, but that world evangelicals should become more biblical.' This statement calls us to get behind the labels and identity markers which may have deceived us into thinking that we are in fact biblical only because we are evangelical.

These doctrines and jargon have anaesthetized the churches to the realities and idols they have subscribed to unawares. Heidegger described this talk as 'idle talk' (*Gerede*). Our interpretation of reality no longer contributes to our understanding of it. It functions like 'gossip' or 'passing the word around', as he says. And because this talk is passed around it is not able to reveal something about reality, but rather it obstructs the genuine understanding of reality.⁸

Heidegger says that 'an understanding of what is talked about is suppos-

6 See Petros Vassiliadis' description of Orthodox theological education, which in my opinion is more prescriptive rather than descriptive, Petros Vassiliadis, Eleni Kasseluri and Pantelis Kalaitzidis, 'Theological Education in the Orthodox World,' in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys* (eds., Dietrich Werner et al.; Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 603-622.

7 Richard S. Briggs, 'The Bible Before Us: Evangelical Possibilities for Taking Scripture Seriously,' in *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology: Engaging with God, Scripture and the World*. (ed., Tom Greggs; London: Routledge, 2010), 14.

8 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson; repr. ed.; New York: Harper, 2008), 210-214.

edly reached in idle talk. Because of this, idle talk discourages any new inquiry and any disputation, and in a peculiar way suppresses them and holds them back.' Our 'traditional, doctrinal' talk about our reality can actually blind us to the reality being talked about.

When the secular tradition is subtly taking over our evangelical ways, even though we continue to call them 'evangelical' then we have a case of 'colonization.' Secularity establishes itself as the only 'sensible' way of thinking and acting and we are conforming to it. But some of us are resisting. 'Living on bread *alone*' cannot characterize us. We refuse to reduce humanity's needs to just 'bread'. Humanity survives on 'bread' and 'the Word,' or rather, it does not simply survive—that is how it is able to live *fully*! Peter Berger calls us a 'cognitive minority.' He says that

those to whom the supernatural is still or again, a *meaningful* [and here I stress meaningful and *relevant*] reality, find themselves in the status of a minority, more precisely, a cognitive minority ... a group formed around a body of deviant 'knowledge'.⁹

Something like ... prophets, perhaps? Prophets should thus be trained to discern through the 'pious talk' and see whether our narrative has been colonized. Are we living out our evangelical identity or have we unwittingly surrendered to a fertility cult?

IV Appropriating the Text

It is extremely difficult to define evan-

gelical identity. One of the most 'effective'¹⁰ definitions that has enjoyed general acceptance¹¹ was offered by David Bebbington¹² and more recently, Timothy Larsen.¹³ Prior to these, J. I. Packer had identified six evangelical fundamentals.¹⁴

However, the more elements used to define evangelicalism the more uneasy our modern-day prophet, John Stott, felt with these definitions. He argued that we should avoid adding anything 'alongside such towering truths as the authority of Scripture, the majesty of

¹⁰ This is the description used by Mark Noll for Bebbington's definition, Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), 16.

¹¹ Timothy Larsen, 'Defining and Locating Evangelicalism,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (eds., Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier; Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 1-2.

¹² He identifies the following four distinctives: *conversionism* (the belief that lives need to be changed); *activism* (the expression of the gospel in service and mission); *biblicism* (the belief that the Bible contains all spiritual truth); and *crucicentrism* (a stress on the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross), D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1-17.

¹³ Larsen attempted to contextualize Bebbington's definition by relating it to the eighteenth-century revival movements associated with John Wesley and George Whitefield. Larsen, 'Defining and Locating Evangelicalism,' 1.

¹⁴ These are: a) the supremacy of Holy Scripture; b) the majesty of Jesus Christ; c) the lordship of the Holy Spirit; d) the necessity of conversion; e) the priority of evangelism; and f) the importance of fellowship. They are mentioned by John Stott in his *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 27-28.

⁹ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), 5-6.

Jesus Christ and the lordship of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ As the subtitle of his book shows, 'a personal plea for unity,' Stott was very keen on promoting unity by distinguishing between what belongs to the centre and what belongs to the circumference, thus allowing as much room for variety in the elaboration of evangelical faith. Indeed Stott was one of the few evangelical thinkers who experienced evangelical faith as it is expressed globally, in a variety of forms and contexts, something which no doubt made him reluctant to homogenize evangelical thought and expression.

I will focus on the authority of Scripture, the first element mentioned by Stott, due to its recognized centrality for evangelicals and theological education in particular. The sacred text is our common world heritage, preserved and handed over to us by both persecuted poor and elite benefactors and collectors. The fact that different types of books from different authors, different ages and contexts are brought together to form a canon shows that *many* voices can simultaneously speak as *one* voice. The historical and the particular can at the same time be trans-historical and universal. No one book can exhaust truth but it is only when all voices come together, bound to each other that we can see the fullness of revelation.

I think the same is true of the reader. Isolated reading communities need to enrich their understanding of God from other communities or traditions or they may be in danger of shielding

themselves against any possibility of reform. One should hear what the Spirit says to *all* the churches, as we are in fact reading what the Spirit said to Corinth and Ephesus and Philippi.

Because the texts, by becoming a *canon*, have been elevated from the historical to the trans-historical, the prophet's task is *not* to be solely a historian (that is the secular focus usually to which all of you here refused to limit yourselves). The prophet is to uphold this dual nature of the scriptures by repeatedly *rescuing* the text from the irrelevancy of being a historical relic. It is read and reread through the ages, by different communities in different contexts and is constantly appropriated in a dynamic way into their lives. We have not received a one-size-fits-all *interpretation* of the text that can dispense of the text once this interpretation is adopted, but it is the re-readable, re-interpretable *text* that is able to be in a dynamic relationship with its readers.

For this reason, prophets in *every* context must be trained in the biblical languages because this is the means through which the text is able to be revisited for fresh understandings and to be *owned* by every context. Contextual interpretation is first and foremost contextual *translation*. My own research in the Septuagint has confirmed how theologically *influenced* translations usually are. Abandoning the biblical languages in theological education would amount to surrendering the interpretation of our sacred texts to foreign interpreters. The last decades have convinced us of the indispensable role of the reader, so much so that he/she cannot be substituted by another.

But let us not fall back to the 'comfort talk'. Scripture can very easily be

15 John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 27-28.

brought in to serve our 'fertility cults', it can be used to promote apartheid, it can be used to justify nationalism, wars and oppression, promote our political parties and their agendas and establish a prosperity gospel.

The Bible can even be used *against* biblical education, if you can believe that! These are some of the worst examples of reading the text within a closed unchallenged community. Yes, we may be reading our Bibles but isolated exegesis of the text is not enough. Knowing the biblical languages and mastering all the exegetical tools is inadequate. We are only one book in the canon of Christ's universal body.

If Christ is the truth, then all the members of His body must speak it and live it, and all members of His body must hear each other. Not only His body that is visible now on this earth, but His body that went before us, the church fathers, the reformers, all history of interpretation must be heeded.

And this heeding of different diachronic and synchronic voices and traditions does not usually happen within a church or denomination, but in the context of multi-denominational theological education, in libraries, in friendly debates and in co-operative ministries. To be 'biblical' is not a simple or easy task. The question is: How can we ensure that we are biblical *without* reading our 'fertility cult' into the text? How can we shield *against* shielding ourselves from the disturbing voices of the prophets?

V Concluding Remarks

Having been trained to study and identify our society's 'fertility cults' and critically discern realities behind the

surface of 'pious' chatter, the prophet has done the work of putting our lenses of reading the text under scrutiny. But what now? Is the prophet able to take us back to a golden age of uncontaminated reading and an uncontaminated church? Are the prophets not a product of their culture also, limited to their community's understanding? Yes, they are.

Therefore, prophets must continually defamiliarize themselves from the text as well as from their tradition by remaining open to the interpretation of the other, by stepping in the shoes of the other and looking upon their own tradition as in need of rethinking and readopting anew. Did not Isaiah look at Israel and Israel's election from the perspective of the nations? Did not Job, a non-Israelite teach us about Yahweh? Did not Abraham see his sin before God through the conviction of Abimelech, the king of Egypt? Did not the wonders among the Gentiles make the Jerusalem council understand the words of the prophets on how the booth of David is being rebuilt?

This is the burden of the prophets. They carry the weight of the people of God on their shoulders. They cannot settle, become comfortable, feel at home. The role of evangelical theological education is to encourage, support and equip prophets who will be able to identify our fertility cults which claim our allegiance. They will be able to expose our pious talk that deceives us and reveal hidden allegiances we are unaware of. They will be able to show us life beyond 'bread', by rescuing our texts from oblivion, re-reading them for us and opening our ears to what the Spirit says through the other, show us truths from unexpected places.

The Confessional Character of Theological Education and the Training of Disciples

Carver T. Yu

Keywords: Prophets, church, discipleship, individualism, professional scholars, critical scholarship, confessionalism,

I Introduction

'Rooted in the Word, Engaged in the World'—this title of the ICETE 2012 Consultation expresses the evangelical spirit and commitment extremely well. However, we need to see the inner dialectic between the two. To be genuinely rooted in the Word, the church has to be passionately engaged in the world. Failure to engage in the world is a sign of not being truly rooted in an obedient way. On the other hand, to be relevant and forcefully engaged, the church has to be firmly rooted in the Word. Without this rootedness, there can be no relevant and life-transforming message from the church.

Prophets in the OT are intensely relevant and powerful in their message. Why? because they 'have been spoken to'. The word 'prophet' means precisely 'the one who has been spoken to'.

The main characteristic of a prophet is not in his speaking, but in the fact that he has been spoken to by God. He speaks out of obedience to speak the message entrusted to him. With no message entrusted, he has no need to speak. Jeremiah has been spoken to, and this causes him great pain as he laments, albeit with a sense of relief, 'Whenever I speak, I cry out, proclaiming violence and destruction, the Word of God has brought me insult and reproach... But if I say, I will not mention Him and speak any more in His name, His Word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bone.' (Jer 20:8-9).

This morning as I am prepared to speak about rootedness in theological education, there is a fire in my bone too. After being in the business of theological education for more than thirty years, right at the end of my ministry there has emerged resounding doubts about the effectiveness of what I have been doing and what I have defended earnestly. Now let me share with you my struggle.

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II Struggle – the Church

John Stott's book *The Living Church* points us to the heart of the identity of the church. The church, Uncle John reminds us, is at the centre of God's eternal purpose of salvation. A church that is alive would uphold this identity, dwelling deep in the truth of the gospel entrusted to her. The gospel is the life transforming truth about ourselves, who are utterly helpless in the depth of our sinfulness, and about God, who gave himself to redeem us. Without this gospel, we would be free, yes, free to fall into the abyss of destruction. To be part of the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose we have to live out a life that is worthy of the gospel, the life of radical discipleship, following Jesus every step of the way, even to the cross.

In his last book, *Radical Discipleship*, Uncle John calls the church back to the root of her being. In choosing to write *Radical Discipleship* at almost the end of his life, it was as if he drew on his remaining strength to remind the church once again who she is. The church is a community of disciples called by Jesus Christ. Losing that identity, we lose everything. Why did Uncle John choose that last message to give to the church? I suspect there is something in the church that has continued to worry him deeply.

He points out in *The Living Church*, 'In many parts of the world, especially in significant regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the church is growing rapidly...the growth is in size rather than in depth, for there is much superficiality of discipleship everywhere.' (p. 21) Or as he puts it in another context, 'The church is 3,000 miles wide and an inch deep. Many are babes in Christ.' Despite the phenomenal

growth, the church is in fact in crisis, a crisis that touches the very core of her being. What is the crisis? It is the crisis of evangelical identity and existence due to the erosion of evangelical faith and the evasion of discipleship.

III Secular Methods

How have we come to that? On the surface, we can blame it on the influence of secular culture. Indeed, the church is in danger of being held captive by a market driven culture, being driven to cater for religious consumers for the sake of drawing them into the church in great numbers. The drive and technique for growth and for program expansion come into the centre stage. Doing that, compromises would have to be made. The implication is clear. David Wells has long lamented about the fact that increasing numbers of evangelical churches 'are adapting themselves to the felt needs in the congregation much as a business might adapt its product to a market.' Such adaptation 'has enabled evangelicalism to orient itself to our consumer culture and the habits of mind that goes with it.'¹

However, in a narcissistic culture like ours, people are not looking for personal salvation but psychological well-being. They come to the church as religious consumers who are free to define their needs and demands. Those who understand the trend of popular orientation best would be able to draw the greatest crowd. With the intrusion of the market ethos, 'the importance

¹ David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 173.

of theology is eclipsed by the clamour for management skills, biblical preaching by entertaining story-telling, godly character by engaging personality....' Ministers' competence is measured by managerial skills and not theological insights or spiritual depth.²

As this is taking place, individualism has found an easy inroad into the church. The confessional character of theology is thus becoming more and more questionable, as common consensus and communal commitment to faith have become so fragmented that theological expressions are often treated as personal opinions or ideologies. Theological reflection and judgment get trivialized in the life of the church. The church is no longer a learning church, learning the apostolic and historic faith as her life-blood.

How have we come to that? Beneath the surface of such phenomena, there we have a deeper crisis, the crisis of theology and the crisis of theological education. The erosion of evangelical faith has its epicentre at evangelical seminaries. The loss of confessional character of theology happens there first.

IV Professional Scholars

There has been a general trend for decades for theologians to take theology as a profession rather than as a mission in being the teacher of the church. In fact, rather unfortunately, not a few of these theologians have lost their faith, and they remain in seminaries and universities only to help others to lose theirs. In 1999 I was drafted into

a consultation in Heidelberg, in which 25 Reformed theologians engaged in dialogue about the future of Reformed theology. There we had a few colleagues raving about non-exclusivity as the guiding principle for Reformed theology if Reformed theology was to have a future in this pluralistic world.

I was rather blunt in response. And I asked, 'Is there a limit to non-exclusivity? Can it include a view that rejects precisely non-exclusivity?' I pointed out further that all living systems have a mechanism that excludes whatever threatens the integrity of their life. Only a dead man does not discriminate and exclude. I cautioned my colleagues with an interesting remark made by William Temple about prostitution, as reported by his biographer. The word 'prostitute', according to Temple, comes from a Latin word which means 'to lay bare'. A prostitute is someone who lays bare his/her self to be open to anyone who may come in and go out at will. A theology that allows anything to come in and out freely amounts to theological prostitution. If Reformed theology were to do that, it would not have any future.

My friend Colin Gunton was there in the consultation, and he said to me afterward, 'Carver, you caught these guys right there.' The next day, we went to the University Church for Sunday Worship. We were quite shocked to find barely 50 souls there, with the 25 conferees included. It was quite a depressing feeling worshipping in this empty historic centre of Reformation where the Heidelberg Catechism was drafted. The church was dead, and what remains is nothing but a monument of failure due mainly to her unfaithfulness to the gospel. Theo-

2 Wells, *No Place*, 233f.

logical unfaithfulness has serious consequences.

Two years later, in 2001, a group of 26 Reformed Biblical scholars met in Stellenbosch, SA, to discuss hermeneutics. I was drafted as one of the four Reformed systematic theologians to provide the theological perspective. Hans Wader, a Bultmannian NT scholar from the University of Zürich, sounded the clarion call to defend autonomous reason in biblical research. He used Kant's definition of *Aufklärung*, declaring that we are no longer minors, we have come of age, and we should exercise our judgment freely without having to worry about constraints from external authority. Hans Wader belongs to the old school of historical critical scholarship.

There were others who went for ideological reading of the Bible, or reader-response type of hermeneutics. I was one of the very few who insisted that the Bible has to be read confessionally, or else it would be read wrongly in an irresponsible way. I played a little trick on my reader-response colleagues by expounding Roland Barthes's philosophy of reading, regarding a text as nothing more than a collection of ever-shifting cultural-linguistic codes. Pushing this idea to its logical conclusion, the reader himself would eventually be deconstructed into a collection of ever-shifting linguistic codes also. The act of reading becomes pointless, the pleasure for reading is pointless as the reader is basically unidentifiable. Reading, at least certain reading, has serious consequence. Some leads to life transformation. The Gospel of John sums up the author's intention in John 20:31 'These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son

of God, and that by believing Him you may have life in His name.'

I then asked my colleagues, why read the Bible, why spend your life studying it, why such an industry going on, if there is nothing significant to your life and to that of others? As for me, if the Bible is mere human literature, I won't give a damn to it, I would rather be reading Bhagavad-Gita than the Bible for poetry, or Nagarjuna's Buddhist texts for refreshing poetry and spiritual insights, or perhaps Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, or Homer's *Iliad*, for drama and philosophical insights, or even Roland Barthes just for the heck of it, for sheer pleasure of reading.

I told my colleagues that understanding and misunderstanding the Bible can be a matter of life and death. To illustrate my point, I used a scenario from the 2nd World War. Early in the war, Britain was on the losing side in the sea, for German U-boats were highly effective in locating and sinking British vessels. The British intercepted every message from the German command to the U-boats, but could not decode it. So for a while, warships were sunk, and hundreds of seamen were sent to the depth of the sea. Alan Turing, a young mathematician from Cambridge, was recruited, and in a few months, he found the key to decode the message. The tide was turned. In doing the decoding, Turing had to believe that there were objective messages, and decoding these messages meant life and death to his countrymen. How did he do it? He had to follow the logic of encoding. He had to think after the way the encoder thought. It is an interpretation with deep humility, the humility of following, of thinking after.

I pleaded with my colleagues that if

we believe there is any objective significance in the message of the Bible at all, we would have to follow the logic with which God reveals himself. To read and understand his Word, we have to think after the way he thinks as he unfolds his plan of salvation. At the same time, the texts were not written for pleasure as postmodernists would have it. Those who wrote the gospels wrote by putting their life at stake. They have a significant message to convey. Also, much blood of martyrs was spilt for defending and keeping the Word. I was deeply touched by John Piper's account of William Tyndale's martyrdom for translating the Bible into English so that his countrymen could read it first hand. I was of course the lone voice in Stellenbosch.

Well, you can shrug your shoulders and say, these guys are liberals, and we are evangelicals, we are not like them. Are we sure? Is it not true that many evangelical scholars, though upholding their evangelical faith, seldom move beyond technical analysis of genre, structure or rhetoric to distil theological truth from the texts being treated. It is as if theology is to be left to theologians, and once they have finished the analysis, their job is done. Is it not common that Biblical scholars are hesitant to study the Bible with a confessional lens? To maintain themselves as respectable scholars, to be undistracted from their specialization on certain books, they would humbly decline to see the whole of the Bible, as if doing that would jeopardize their expertise. I suspect not a few would feel reluctant to take a confessional stance in interpreting the Bible.

Worse still, many evangelical biblical scholars seldom care to take theol-

ogy seriously. After having been armed with the most basic systematic theology, they would put it aside and plunge into the sea of biblical research. With inadequate theological resource for hermeneutical anchor, with inadequate philosophical background for critical reflection on current trends, they can be easily swayed into following the main stream.

V Confessionalism

Ellen Davis, OT professor at Duke University, shared her struggle. As a young professor, she was required to teach an introduction course on OT studies. The course was taught regularly as a study of the literary history, social history and history of religions of the Hebrew people. She confessed that she was not interested in teaching a course like this. She took the risk and taught the course from the perspective of faith. She pleads that we can and we should read the Bible confessionally. She says in her essay 'Teaching the Bible Confessionally in the Church' that

in the present intellectual climate, I believe the Bible is often read 'too historically'—that is, too narrowly so. Many students in mainstream Protestant seminaries study the Bible as if its aim were to give us insight into ancient ideologies and events. Yet a confessional reading sees in the Bible a different aim: first of all, to tell us about the nature and will of God...the Bible's aim is to do theology.

Not many Biblical scholars, even evangelical ones, have the courage to go against the stream; too often they feel obliged to apologize for reading the

Bible confessionally.

When it comes to systematic theology or dogmatic theology, the situation is not too different, the loss of confessional character in the teaching and learning of theology is quite obvious. Specialization takes its toll. Many theologians would feel comfortable focusing on a theological system, and spend much of his/her academic life studying a theologian or an issue.

The heart for taking the faith of the church as a whole and expounding it seems to be on the wane. Instead of expounding doctrines Biblically through the lens of historical-theological formulations, trying to articulate them for contemporary contexts, theological teachers more often than not would take the easy way of merely rehearsing an array of theological views on certain doctrines: what Karl Barth says, what Paul Tillich says, what Pannenberg says, or what Colin Gunton says, etc. What students get from a systematic theology course on doctrine would end up to be a heap of broken images about certain doctrines. There is much uncertainty and even confusion as to what the church actually believes in regard to that particular doctrine.

Equally damaging is the impression that theology as the articulation of the faith of the church is nothing but theological opinions, completely open ended. With such an impression, the ministers we are turning out lack the confidence to teach. When asked by lay people he ministers to about certain doctrinal truth and its implications, he would likely fumble and just murmur a few theological terms or names he learns from seminary. The fact that he is entrusted by the church to be teacher of the church would be evaded. The

fact that theology always means theology of church, as articulation of her dogma, and not theological opinions of individual believers would also be missed by his congregation.

What is theology? Let me borrow Barth's definition. Theology is a science, what sort of a science? It is a science of critique. Critique of what? It is a critique of the church's proclamation to examine and test whether it is being faithful to the Word of God. As the Word of God is God's self-giving revelation in Jesus Christ, being faithful to the Word of God necessarily means being faithful to His self-giving love to the world, and thus has to be relevant and responsive to the needs of the world.

Theology so defined is rooted in the church's proclamation, serves within the proclamation of the church as the guardian of biblical truth. It has the single purpose of bringing the church's proclamation in line with God's revelation in Jesus Christ, testified and expounded by the Holy Spirit in and through the Bible. All theology thus has to be Biblical theology in the broad sense. As science, it is bounded and determined by the object of its inquiry, and that means God's act of revealing Himself.

Theology cannot do other but thinks after God's purpose and the logic of His actions in unfolding His eternal purpose. Doing theology is an act of obedience. Obeying what has been given to the church as truth. Its task is to ensure that it is being articulated, expounded and made contemporary faithfully. Theology has to be confessional in character, for it guarantees the right and truthful confession of the church to the world.

The church is 'One Holy Catholic'

church preserved in Christ by the Holy Spirit from generation to generation. Despite diverse historic contexts facing diverse challenges, and thus distinctive emphases on aspects of faith, historic confessions of the church nevertheless affirm one another as truthful articulation of the same gospel. Together they are 'co-confessors' of the same truth, and thus testify to the living presence of the Holy Spirit among them.

Being faithful to the Bible and being faithful to historic confessions of the church go hand in hand together. In so doing, we acknowledge God's unceasing and continuous work in history, we acknowledge the oneness of our life in Christ, past, present and future. We truly believe in the 'Communion of the Saints.' Indeed, in the past as much as the present, we all have to struggle to articulate our faith and confess it to our contemporaries, but the Holy Spirit ensures that what truly matters in the gospel comes through in those confessions done in faithful obedience to the Word of God. We do not confess our faith alone, isolated in our context; we are one part of the unison of the Holy Catholic church in confessing Christ together.

To be trained as teachers of the church, theological students have to be solidly grounded in the Bible as well as historic confessions of the church so that they know what to teach as genuinely belonging to the faith of the church, that they can make judgment as to where to stand firm in time of turmoil. When Hitler proclaimed his *Führer* principle in 1933 when he became the Chancellor of Germany, a 26 year old theologian responded in a radio message titled 'The Younger Genera-

tion's Alternative Concept of Leadership', warning against idolatry in the *Führer* principle. This young man was Bonhoeffer. His response was theologically rooted in the lordship of Jesus Christ. It was his Christocentric theology that guided him through the most difficult days of his ministry.

Teaching our seminarians what the church believes, preparing them to be teachers of the church, is vital for them as future ministers and vital for the integrity of the church.

VI Discipleship

But there is something more. Teaching them what the church believes is not enough. Training them to make disciples is even more vital and fundamental. To John Stott, discipleship is radical because it is the very root of our faith. It is foundational to being saved. Let me tell you a story and you would understand.

Five and a half years ago, I was introduced by a friend to a brother and a sister who were about to get married. They came for advice about certain things. After settling what they came for, the brother shared with me his plight. He had just become a Christian for six months. Right after he accepted Christ, he was investigated and eventually charged for bribery. He was the CFO of a big corporation. He signed the cheque of the bribe. His lawyer was confident that he could come out unscathed; the only thing he needed to remember was to confess nothing. He asked me what a Christian in such a situation should do.

I then asked him, 'Do you truly believe in Christ?' He answered affirmatively. Then I asked, 'Are you willing

to see God's will being done on earth as it is in Heaven?' to be followed by, 'Are you willing to see God's will being done in you?' He answered both affirmatively. Then I asked another set of two questions: 'Are you willing to see God's justice being done on earth? Are you willing to see God's justice being done in you?' For the last question, he paused for a long while before he affirmed. Then I asked, 'Have you done something unjust?'

He did not answer. But after a few days, he called back to let me know that he decided to confess to the prosecutor against the advice of his lawyer. Because of that, he got a sentence of 40 months in jail. As I visited him in jail five months later, I saw a totally transformed man, calm, peaceful and assured. He told me he did not regret making the decision for it was the right thing to do. After doing what he did, he felt the kind of peace he had never felt in his life.

He spent long hours reading the Bible every day, witnessing about Christ in the prison and brought five to Christ. After 20 months, he was released, went back to the same company for another post his boss cut for him. After a year or so, I was told by one of his colleagues that the whole corporate culture was changed because of him. This to me is radical discipleship.

In the face of this brother's testimony, I keep asking myself, how can all the grand curricula and all the industry of teaching and learning in our seminary program 'produce' a disciple so obedient to the call for discipleship? There seems to be a gap between seminary programs and discipleship, that discipleship has not been in the agenda of theological education. Disciple-

ship often seems to be something that comes as an after-thought to be supplemented by parachurch organizations. It is not being regarded as the main business of ministry. The passion and craft of discipleship are left to those uninitiated in theological education.

VII Application

Reading John Stott's book and re-reading Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* has led me to think hard in humility. Have we been doing the job that we should be doing in theological education? Bonhoeffer saw the failure of the university type of theological education to serve the church. He designed a curriculum that aimed precisely at the nurturing of discipleship. In Finkenwalde, the small theological community centred on studying the Bible, praying with the Bible at the centre, and building themselves as a communion. Barth, hearing all these activities, was concerned that he was compromising theological rigor for devotional edification. Bonhoeffer responded:

I am firmly convinced that in view of what the young theologians bring with them from the university and in view of the independent work which will be demanded of them in the parishes...they need a completely different kind of training which life together in a seminary like this unquestionably gives. You can hardly imagine how empty, how completely burnt out most of the brothers are when they come to the seminary. Empty not only as regards theological insights and still more as regards knowledge of the Bible, but also as regards their personal life....there is really serious and so-

ber theological, exegetical and dogmatic work going on. Otherwise all these questions are given the wrong emphases. (270-271)

These ordinands have to be nurtured as disciples that take God's grace seriously. Bonhoeffer saw clearly, cheap grace is the deadliest enemy of the church. It is grace without discipleship, without the cross. Bonhoeffer told his friend Hildebrandt, these seminarians have to be trained in such a way that they can truly preach evangelical sermons. By evangelical sermons, he meant

A truly evangelical sermon must be

like offering a child a fine and red apple or offering a thirsty man a cool glass of water and then saying: Do you want it?.. We must be able to speak about our faith so that hands will be stretched out toward us faster than we can fill them...Do not try to make the Bible relevant. Its relevance is axiomatic.. Do not defend God's Word, but testify to it...Trust to the Word. It is a ship loaded to the very limits of its capacity. (272)

With these words, I need to end here. My struggle as a theological educator will continue. I hope this sharing helps you to join my struggle too.

Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel
R. Paul Stevens
Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture

Reviewed by David Parker
Richard E. Burnett (ed.)
The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth

Book Reviews

ERT (2014) 38:4, 378-379

**Work Matters: Lessons from
Scripture**
R. Paul Stevens
Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans:
2012
ISBN 978-0-8028-6696-7
Pb, pp viiix + 176

*Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible
Institute, Dublin, Ireland.*

What is the meaning of work? What is good work? What work is holy and eternal and what work is transitory and purposeless? Whose work matters to God? These are the sorts of questions that Paul Stevens explores in a concise, readable and thought-provoking series of studies of twenty biblical characters at work drawn from the Pentateuch (Adam & Eve, Cain, Jacob, Joseph, Bezalel), historical books (Ruth, David, Nehemiah, Esther), wisdom books (Job, the sluggard, the Businessperson, the Professor), prophets (Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah) and New Testament (Martha, Priscilla/Aquila, Paul, John).

Stevens defines work as 'any purposeful expenditure of energy – whether manual, mental, or both, whether paid or not'. The book aims to embrace a biblical theology of work: explaining the theological significance of work by draw-

ing on the whole canon of Scripture. Each of the five sections of the Bible is briefly introduced and then followed by short but pithy discussion of about 4-6 pages on individual workers in their own context, concluding with some questions for discussion and reflection.

Initially I wondered if this structure would lead to a rather disjointed and superficial survey of loosely connected reflections that could not deliver a meaningful biblical theology of work. But Stevens, who is Professor Emeritus of marketplace theology and leadership at Regent College, has written extensively elsewhere on this theme and knows what he is doing. Each chapter is well written; built on informed theological learning about work, capitalism and contemporary culture that is worn lightly. Rather than attempt to develop a systematic theology of work through the lens of one particular doctrine (such as Trinity, Creation, Image of God, kingdom of God, eschatology and so on), Stevens lets a biblical theology emerge layer on layer of each 'case study'. The result is an accessible and practical book, ideal for personal or group use.

A sketch of two examples may give a flavour of the book. A chapter on Cain reflects on his alienation and curse, linking it with the nature of 'degraded work'; where work becomes a place of violence, conflict, sin, dread, injustice

and people-destroying work environments that can crush the spirit as well as the body. Stevens reflects on how an unrestrained global capitalism feeds on greed or fear (depending on market sentiment) and has led to the globalization of poverty, hyper-resource consumption and economic alienation from transcendent norms. Work, for many, is a hostile place. The global workplace is marked by high unemployment, damage to the biosphere, loss of community, crisis of cultural identity, and conflict in labour relations. This is the reality of work after the Fall: a mixture of blessing and curse. On the one hand, globalization brings opportunity to 'work and serve towards the vision of the New Jerusalem', on the other hand, it is not and cannot advance the kingdom of God. Stevens rightly urges an eschatological attitude to work: 'we must be empowered by the future, the eternity that is infiltrating the thorns and thistles of this world now.'

A chapter on Martha opens up reflection and discussion of the pervasive dualism within much Christianity between 'spiritual' contemplative work and the 'secular' world of work. Stevens traces how the Mary and Martha story has often been taken as affirming the superiority of the religious life (contemplation, vocation, pastoral ministry) while

simultaneously diminishing the value of ordinary domestic life of marriage, family, kitchen, hospitality and practical work. He questions such a polarized interpretation. Martha's problem was not doing the generous work of hospitality, it was her misplaced priorities that led to neglect of fellowship at Jesus' feet. Stevens argues that the story, the rest of the New Testament and examples from church history all point to the best of church tradition as combining 'Mary and Martha as parallel patterns for Christian living.' This affirms that manual work is good work, even holy work. It reminds us that no work (of whatever type) should become so self-absorbing that it becomes a barrier to reflection and prayer. Finally, in the rush of modern life, it offers a challenge that active contemplation today involves taking the initiative. This means looking on routine and manual work as a gift as well as seeking out opportunities for quiet and prayerful withdrawal. In this sense, Stevens concludes, every Christian should have the hyphenated name of Mary-Martha.

A short epilogue and useful select bibliography on the theology of work closes the book. Overall an edifying and refreshing read that I have no hesitation in recommending.

ERT (2014) 38:4, 379-380

The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth, edited by Richard E. Burnett (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013) ISBN 978-0-664-22530-8; Pb, pp 242, bibliog.

Burnett's book is part of the series, *The Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology*, which is designed to assist scholars studying historical and contemporary movements and theologians by providing 'concise and accurate treatments' of theological ideas relevant to the particular subject; there are already 8 others in the series. A carefully worded 6 page introduction not only highlights the significance of Barth

and his theology, but also sets the parameters which need to be understood before delving into this volume. The editor acknowledges the difficulty and hazards of writing short articles on Barth's theology, and also expresses regret that only Western authors are involved. The 96 articles (a handy list of provided at the beginning), range in length from 500 to 2500 words and cover everything from 'actualism' to 'worship' with a few on theologians (such as Brunner, Herrmann and Luther, some on disciplines like apologetics, hermeneutics and preaching, but most on theological topics, including atonement, ethics, orders of creation, revelation and trinity. Despite the obvious limitations of a compendium like this, especially so in the case of Barth, the 65 contributors (the 'largest team of Barth scholars ... ever gathered to interpret (his) theology') and the editor have produced a volume that serves its purpose well.

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor, Evangelical Review of Theology

Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Volume 38

2014

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theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

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Stanley E. Porter and Matthew R. Malcolm (eds), *The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics*

How should we expect multiple interpretations of the Bible to be kept in check? Each of the contributors, experts in their field, considers one parameter of responsibility, which may act as a constraint on the validity of competing biblical interpretations. *Stanley E. Porter* on theological responsibility; *Walter Moberly* on ecclesial responsibility; *Richard S. Briggs* on scriptural responsibility; *Matthew R. Malcolm* on kerygmatic responsibility; *James D.G. Dunn* on historical responsibility; *Robert C. Morgan* on critical responsibility; *Tom Greggs* on relational responsibility, and *Anthony C. Thiselton* considers the topic as a whole.

'The Future of Biblical Interpretation represents a good survey of the world-wide debate on hermeneutics and offers important new insights. It is an important contribution for present research. The volume is topical and important and I recommend it.'
Petr Pokorný, Charles University, Prague.

'Given the list of contributors, this exciting book promises to expose us to a broad reading of hermeneutics. It is sure to be useful to those researching the topic, as well as those who simply wish to read Scripture more coherently. I warmly recommend it.'
Michael Parsons, formerly Director of Postgraduate Research, Vose Seminary, Perth, Western Australia.

Stanley E. Porter is President, Dean, and Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. **Matthew R. Malcolm** is Lecturer in New Testament and Greek, Trinity Theological College, Western Australia

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