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A Global Forum

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Roland J. Lowther is the pastor of Eternity Presbyterian Church, Queensland, Australia. He holds a PhD from the University of Queensland on the subject, 'Living by the Spirit'.

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Editorial: The Dynamic of Theology

In this issue WE follow the 'dynamic of theology' from basic principles into a variety of areas of application. The foundation is set by Rolf Hille (Germany), a former Executive Director of the WEA Theological Commission, who examines the nature of the gospel and its relationships with its context, using developments in European theology and philosophy over recent centuries as his map. He shows that there is no 'abstract idealism' involved, but that 'God's way is to speak his word into various human contexts'. He concludes that 'The flexibility in cross-cultural work must always be bound back to the one pure gospel of the justification of the sinner by grace alone.'

So the exposition of this gospel to the faithful takes on considerable importance, a topic addressed by Myles MacBean (UK/Malawi). With his innovative study of preaching, he presents 'a simple model to facilitate reflective practice among preachers and to aid their training', which is well backed up with empirical testing in two different cultures.

We then move into an area which we have never covered before in the 40 years this journal has been published – military chaplaincy! We welcome Colonel Craig Bickell, CSM (Australia) to our pages as he shows how the Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms, and indeed that the Christian faith of some of its members can contribute to the combat capability of the Army.

Just as important is the way this dynamic works out in the context of other world religions. David Thang Moe (USA/Myanmar) presents an evangelical trinitarian theology from a missiological perspective, interacting with other theological endeavours in this field, and using insights drawn from his own particular background. His comprehensive model provides a theoretical foundation for different strands of the Faith - effective evangelism, integrating cultural insights, and promoting social justice and nation building.

In an analogous way, Ebenezer Yaw Blasu (Ghana) looks at the implications of this dynamic of theology in ecological matters. Hence, he argues for a new engagement in earth keeping responsibilities, involving a reconstructed eco-theology, especially from his own context of indigenous African religious eco-ethics.

Taking an even wider perspective, our final article by Iain Provan (Canada/Scotland) shows how all of creation and redemption are bound together. In this 'classic' article reproduced from an earlier issue of our journal, he concludes, 'In all things we are called to act out the kingdom of God. And that is why holistic ministry is not one option among many for the Christian. Holistic ministry is simply bound up with what being a Christian is all about—being true to the nature of things.'

So from every corner of the globe and in all areas of human life, we can see how truly dynamic essential Christian theology is!

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

The Evangelical Missionary Movement: the pure gospel, or can there be a bit of progress, enlightenment and colonialism?

Rolf Hille

1 Random Observations in Ghana

The setting is a public primary and middle school near the Ghanaian capital Accra. It is December 2012. In the pleasant coolness of the morning before the beginning of our meetings I am always drawn to the KGs, that is, to the 'Kindergarten kids'—the frizzy hair, big dark eyes, the easy smile of the children's faces with their flashing white teeth. I know these are the clichés of a European grandfather who cannot escape the charm of the young Africans. The school is located right next to the campus of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, where we are meeting with the Committee of the Global Christian Forum, an international ecumenical working group.

So I go over to the spacious schoolyard where the different classes have lined up in three rows for the start of the lesson. These include the preschool children and the first-graders. The children are decked out in blue school uniforms based on the British model with white shirt and necktie. But one of them has forgotten his tie. Weeping, he steps out of the line and gets some swats from the teacher on the back. Another has no proper shoes. He suffers the same fate.

They sing a hymn together, followed by 'The Lord's Prayer'. The national anthem is played. They put their right hands on their hearts. They are dismissed to their classrooms and they read together the text written on the blackboard: 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want' (Psalm 23:1). Finally, instruction begins.

What kind of strange amalgam is it that comes together here? There are deep traces of the work of Basel missionaries, with a self-evident Christian confession at a state school. This is supplemented by the British educa-

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tional tradition and the almost military drill of old colonial times.

This event is certainly nothing more than a very incidental flash of light into an African country which has been strongly influenced by Christianity and which has a colonial history full of change And yet, this snapshot makes the explosiveness of our subject plainly clear: 'The Evangelical missionary movement—the pure gospel, or is a bit of progress, idealism, and colonialism allowed?'

It *was* allowed. Not only in the past, over more than two hundred years of missionary activity, but even today, politics and Bible, business interests and personal testimony may still be strikingly interwoven. We were in Accra in the week before the Ghanaian presidential elections. On the one side a Pentecostal preacher and on the other, an elder of a Presbyterian congregation stood as candidates.

The Pentecostal advertised his cause with an Old Testament Bible verse: 'The battle is the Lord's'—the Lord decides the election campaign. In the streetscape of the capital, hopelessly overloaded by traffic, there is hardly a car on which a Bible word or a confession of Jesus is not attached as a bumper sticker, next to a campaign slogan and information about the owner.

Was the declared intention of the missionaries to proclaim the pure gospel only an illusion in the face of the temptations and needs of this world? Did they fail with their purist missionary concept?

II The Crazy (Displaced) Purity Requirements of Idealistic Philosophy

Indeed, the phrases chosen for the topic do have an ironic undertone. It would also be too naive to believe that one could build a church or even rule a secular state exclusively with the gospel without regard for the interests of this world.

In reality, Prussian discipline intertwines with British traditions and Christian content to form an overall picture, in which it is often impossible to clarify precisely what flows from each source. And yet the demand remains that the pure gospel without admixture should define and characterise Christian mission.

1. The dream of philosophical idealism

Historically, the 19th century was the great epoch of German idealism, beginning with Kant, radicalized by Fichte, developed by Schelling and completed by Hegel. Now it may hardly be assumed that the missionaries, who were sent to Africa and Asia from Pietist Bible schools and seminaries, had participated intensively in the philosophical developments of their epoch. Yet, the long tradition of philosophical idealism has shaped western thought since the time of Plato and Plotinus.

What characterizes this spiritual heritage? First and foremost, the deep conviction that the world of ideas is the real reality. Everything else that we have in mind in the world of tables and benches is only a shady, unclean, and, in fact, already defiled reality.

To give a concrete example: if we

have a table before us, it is not difficult to identify and name this object as a table. The amazing thing is that we have objects that have a round surface or a rectangle made of wood or plastic, which have high or low legs, but all represent the same word 'table' and then in principle we also know what is meant by this.

Platonic philosophy interpreted this phenomenological phenomenon as follows: All the concrete tables that exist in the world have their origin in the idea of the table, which, in an intellectual dimension, embraces all earthly reality, and yet can never be represented materially in this world. For every concrete model of a table, for example, built by a carpenter, is ultimately only an approximation to what claims to be the pure idea.

The table itself, that is, the idea of the table, is realized as a table in every piece of material work, but it is still concealed as a purely spiritual dimension. At the moment it assumes an earthly form, the idealism of its spiritual origin is already abandoned and corrupted.

This being-structure of ideas is further developed, starting with simple material things and increasingly applied to mathematical ideas, ethical values, and finally to the sum of the good, ie, an absolute and ideal representation of God. What we recognize in our world are only derived, shadow-like ideas, which, while they give us an awareness of the nature of the origin, do not really reveal it.

This is not without meaning and impact on the notion of 'the pure gospel'. Is there a presentation of divine revelation in this world that retains its original ideality? Philosophically, this

is hard to imagine and must basically remain a phantom, which one chases after, yet cannot reach. The high estimation of the idealism of the pure prototype in the world of ideas over against their concrete transformations in the world remains, however, even when the call for the pure gospel is raised in theology and the church.

Moreover, this categorically defined the Protestant theology of the late 18th and especially the 19th century, being strongly influenced as it was by German idealism. The ideal goal is a representation of God and a redemption of the pure spiritual soul from this world, one which is removed from all the confusions and aberrations of material reality. Hegel's God is that absolute spirit which cannot be grasped. It can be experienced only through its opposite, the antithesis, which enters into the world and experiences suffering.

This is what Hegel's concept of incarnation, cross, and redemption looks like. In the Hegelian understanding, Jesus a mortal man is the antithesis to the absolute spirit, which alone represents the pure idea of God. In this system of dialectical processes, God is, then, the original thesis.

2. The inevitable conflict of the history of biblical revelation and Hellenistic-Greek philosophy

Apostolic theology in biblical times was a thoroughly missional theology. It was challenged theologically by the philosophical thought patterns of the West. The Greek philosophers since the pre-Socratic age had raised questions about the origin, ie, the *archae* of being, and thus the ontological founda-

tion and general view of reality.

In this respect the problem arises in a particular way as to whether and to what extent this philosophical approach of the Greek tradition is compatible with the biblical way of thinking with respect to form and content. This is ultimately about the basic legitimacy of any missions-oriented theology in respect to contextualization.

Within the relationship of text and context, the term 'text' first refers to the uniqueness of the biblical text as a revelation given in a specific linguistic, cultural, and historical environment. The text of the Hebrew Bible and the oral proclamation of Jesus, communicated by the evangelists and apostles, encountered the Greek-speaking world of the Roman Empire in the age of Hellenism. This placed the biblical texts in a fundamentally different context of world-experience and thinking.

Thus, the early Christian mission was necessarily drawn into the process of contextualization. The challenge of contextualization within the Bible was underlined also by the fact that the New Testament canon was written in the Greek language, although most authors of the New Testament and Jesus himself lived in the Hebrew-Aramaic language and thought-world.

The same applies to the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew canon into Greek. It is not only about the profound differences of language, but also about the fact that language is associated with a cultural mentality as well as a specific historical experience.

For theology, therefore, the encounter of Jewish-Semitic historical thought, as it is anchored in the historical revelation to Israel, represents the primary and constitutive accom-plishment of contextualization with the thought-tradition of philosophical and scientific Hellenism. From the connection between Jewish and Greek thinking arose that fundamental reflective form of theology, which has become characteristic of the two-thousand-year history of the Occident.

Within the Christian churches with their mission and apologetics, what we call systematic theology today, and in particular missionary apologetics, develops from the canonically prescribed forms of language and possibilities of thought, combined with the philosophical thought structure of Hellenism. This particular form of theological reflection still characterizes the theological understanding of the West even today.

A new challenge to contextualization emerged in the early Middle Ages with the mission among the Germans and Slavs north of the Alps. Furthermore, in the course of modern discoveries and the subsequent history of missions history since the 16th century, the Christian mission in Latin America, Asia and finally Africa once again encountered a wealth of cultural and linguistic contexts, into which the Christian message had to be formulated. On a global scale, it is finally evident that in the 20th and 21st centuries (with their characteristic features of mobility and information technology) there is an indispensable need for missionary contextualization.

The interrelationship between text and context is, on the one hand, concerned with the continuity or preservation of the original text, and, on the other hand, with the openness to various new contexts, in which theology must express the text in new language

forms and thought structures. Only in this way can it correspond to the missionary canon on which Paul bases his mission, as expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Discussion today about evangelization of different milieus is only a recent and final offshoot of the need for contextualization which has been evident throughout history.

III The Condescension of God and Historical Revelation

The contrast, as shown, could not be greater. On the one hand there is the pure world of ideas, which is unaffected by all material earthly events and, on the other hand, the down-to-earth tangible stories reported by the Bible.

The God of the Bible is revealed in history; that is, he limits himself to a concrete place and a concrete time, and engages in a specific historical situation. Therefore, Paul can say, 'But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law' (Gal 4.4). The eternal comprehensive truth is thus bound to a tiny province of the Roman Empire in remote Galilee.

The time circumstances are also clearly fixed. It is Herod the Great, who has developed the conditions for the fact that Pontius Pilate, as a Roman governor, has plunged the Jewish people into a deep crisis.

Against the background of historical events in space and time, God also limits himself with his word semantically and mentally to the Semitic languages of Hebrew and Aramaic. The use of these languages also necessarily provides the framework for genuine possibilities of expression and limitations to certain structures of thought.

The challenge is that, with this condescension of God into a historical context, the abstract claim of philosophy is rejected. God has not at all been subtracted, but is bound to, the conditionality of earthly existence.

Furthermore, as God chooses places, times, and situations for his self-disclosure, he confines himself to seemingly entirely accidental conditions and does not claim to disclose knowledge of the truth which is unrelated to the context of this physical world. His truth reveals itself rather in historical realities at specific points in time. The choice of the accidental, sometimes even the arbitrary, is, from our point of view, part of the peculiarities of the action of God.

This can be found throughout the Bible and is already clearly evident in the Old Testament. Among all men at the time of the Flood, Noah finds the grace of God. Abraham, a nomad, is chosen from among the many who pass through the desert. It is tiny Israel that God makes the scene of his action. The small planet Earth in the midst of an infinitely large universe with its incomprehensibly extended Milky Way becomes a place of creation and the history of salvation.

The whole saga of election then finds its completion in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Here, God not only speaks and acts, but as a person he enters without restriction or reservation into the confusion and anxiety of this world. Moreover, even the eschatological hope of the Christian faith is realised in the fact of the bodily resurrection; precisely what is so important for the Platonic doctrine of the soul is denied.

According to Greek understanding, the immortal soul is freed from the

body at death and is placed in an ideal celestial sphere, where it has nothing to do with corporeality. Therefore, the proclamation of the resurrection of the body was rejected by the Greeks as foolishness. But the embodiment in a specific person, although one not merely earthly, is, nevertheless, the hallmark of all biblical revelation.

This entire connection between the condescension of God and the historicity of his revelation is always important also for the body of Christ, that is, the church and her mission. Mission always means concretization of the gospel into the flesh, into a given geographical, ethnic, historical and cultural situation which, with a different claim and self-understanding, is opposed to the Christian message.

Precisely because the revelation of God is historical, mission cannot abandon material reality abstractly in the sense of an idealistic purity, but must engage with it, indeed enter into it. In this sense, contextualization is anything but an invention or a new paradigm of mission theology of the 20th and 21st century. Rather, it is clearly described in the so-called missionary canon of Paul:

> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. (1 Cor 9:19-24).

The pure gospel is thus definitely laid out for contextualization by the apostle to the Gentiles. It is therefore not a question of denying one's own culture when engaging in mission, which is not possible, or denying the culture of the missionary target group. Rather, in a new situation in which non-Christians live, it is a matter of connecting these people with the gospel incarnate in Jesus Christ.

IV The Pure Gospel as a Commission for Contextualization

The issue here is the incontestable tension of eternal divine truth on the one hand and the temporal revelation of this truth in human form on the other. Neither Israel nor the Christian Church received the truth of God in a transcendent sphere in which they would have been direct witnesses to the divine truth, but only in the given form of their respective historical conditions of life.

This proves also to be the ever-new task and challenge in every epoch of missionary history. In this way the missionaries of the 18th-19th centuries faced the 'savages' in the tribal regions of Africa and Asia in the context of the then colonial 'superiority' of Europe. In a difficult process of self-

understanding, the missionaries had to learn to distinguish between their involvement of their own traditional cultural conceptions on the one hand, and, on the other, the culture of the missionary country, with its peculiarities and values, which had already been prepared for the gospel of Jesus Christ or hindrances that it might have presented to the message of Christ.

Mission therefore always implies thorough study, both of the biblical text and of the historical-cultural context. It is crucial that the text clearly has precedence over the context. The truth claim of the text, especially in view of its historical condition, is normative for the newly emerging contexts in mission history.

The thorough study of the biblical text creates the necessary autonomy and distance from the context. The biblical revelation of God is constantly questioning people and their situations and confronts them with a truth that they could not have derived from themselves. Their own knowledge is at least relativized, often negated. By clearly taking into account the profile of the Christian truth claim through the study of scripture, sovereign freedom over the context is established. Thus the text transforms the context.

In this dynamic process of the study of the text, self-critical reflection of the context of missionaries themselves also takes place. This can be avoided only by distancing oneself from the context. People live in their own given context in a kind of notorious blindness. Just as they do not consciously perceive the air that surrounds them, so the uniqueness, danger, and contingency of their own context are not clear to them.

One of the outstanding achievements of missions, therefore, is cultural-historical, that is, becoming sensitive to the conditionality of one's own context, and thus becoming capable of real transcultural awareness. I became aware of this for the first time during a semester spent in research in the United States. Before that, I had always seen Americans at international conferences as people who spoke with great enthusiasm and much optimism about their faith. They developed far-reaching visions. I considered this to be a particularly faithful and authentic gospel attitude of American Christians.

When I then experienced within the country how the economy was presented enthusiastically in advertisements, and how politicians advertised their programs with visionary concepts and showed the same optimism as I had seen from the evangelists, I realized that what I had regarded as genuinely Christian, was at least partly the Christian expression of the 'American Way of Life'. I then combined this criticism with the conclusion that the sometimes crippling or even pessimistic outlook of the Germans was not a pure explication of the Christian faith, but rather a typical mental condition of our own tradition.

Within this horizon of historical conditioning, searching for the pure gospel does not mean abolishing the specifics of different mentalities and ethnic expressions in order to penetrate to the abstract of the pure gospel. Rather, it means asking how the biblical text accepts or even corrects the context in its characteristics and its possibilities.

It is unquestionably an advancement in modern mission theology that these connections have been thorough-

ly analysed and worked out in practice. However, I would have some doubt about talking about a 'paradigm shift in mission theology', since the task of contextualization is already set with the Great Commission, namely, 'going to all peoples'. In the varied and highly differentiated way of the mission from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to the ends of the earth, the task of contextualization has been posed since the very beginnings.

An eloquent example of this is Luke's *Acts of the Apostles*, which tells us how the gospel encountered magical religious ideas, popular Hellenistic polytheism, and the constructs of a highly differentiated Greek philosophy. All these processes demonstrate in a variety of ways the penetration of the text into new contexts and the penetration of the contexts into the text, as Jesus implies in his parable of the leaven.

V The Purity of the Gospel in the Form of the Doctrine of Justification

It would be a disastrous misunderstanding to dismiss the theological task of the proclamation of the pure gospel as impracticable in the face of its confrontation with the purity of idealism. The opposite is the case. Through the on-going challenge of mission, Christian theology has continually set for itself the task of clarifying the nature of the gospel despite its integration into changing historical forms of expression.

In this sense, the pursuit of a '*theologia perennis*', that is, a theology which is always the same is certainly justified. In the controversial theological disputes of the history of theology and the history of missions this fact can be proved in many ways.

Here, in a special way, it is the Reformation of the sixteenth century, which, in the form of the *Confessio Augustana*, Article VII, declares for itself theological purity which is inextricably linked with the truth of the gospel. Here the church is said to be a meeting of the faithful: 'in qua evangelium pure docetur …' (in which the gospel is taught purely). Certainly it is not the abstraction of the Greek doctrine of ideas but the sole efficacy of grace without works of the law.

Luther's whole life and theological struggle were defined by the question of how sinful people can stand before the holy and just God and be saved from the Last Judgment. In this, through his study of the Roman letter, that is, of a biblical text, Luther discovered that the event of justification is an absolutely exclusive matter. There is no way possible, either as a preparation or as a condition, for it to involve human activity in any way whatsoever. Justification is solely by faith (*sola fide*) and by grace alone (*sola gratia*). If in this event any human involvement were involved, even if only a mental one, everything would be spoiled. For the being and actions of people are always sinful before God, even in their best endeavours.

This basic view of the purity of the gospel is foundational for the evangelical church and theology. It cannot be asserted of this pure truth that it is abstract and without context in the idealistic sense. Rather, it is strongly connected with the historical presuppositions of the late Medieval church as well as with the framework of Germanic perceptions of law.

Without the penitential theol-

ogy propagated by the late Medieval church with its prerequisites for the right acceptance of grace and the open question of purgatory or indulgence, justification solely from grace without works as taught by Luther would not be conceivable. For example, in dealing with the so-called antinomians, i.e., those groups which wanted to abolish the law altogether (or Dietrich Bonhoeffer's critique of 'cheap grace') the proclamation of justification still remains as a crucial norm. The lack of moral seriousness and effective sanctification cannot and should not deny the truth of justification by grace alone.

The *cantus firmus* of a biblical theology of missions and evangelism remains therefore bound to the Christological and soteriological context of the doctrine of justification. Justification is possible because Christ, through his sinless holiness on the cross, saves the sinful human. A person is enabled by the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit to believe in the message of justification. Missionary theology, which does not proceed wholly from the justifying Christ, has given up its essence.

VI Concrete Problems in the Cultural Baggage of Western Missionaries

The present insights into the missiological definition of the purity of the gospel will now be briefly outlined and related in a concluding section, at least in some aspects, to the concrete situation of evangelical missions in the 18th and 19th centuries.

1. European nationalism and colonialism

With the great discoveries at the beginning of the modern age (North and South America, Africa, and Asia), the feeling of cultural and religious superiority of western imperialism developed. People were thus so connected with their own traditions that the cultural, economic, and political structures of Europe were largely identified with the truth claim of the Christian church.

This merging of European and North American superiority with respect to the ethnic groups and cultures of the southern hemisphere was so dominant that the expansion of the western empire by colonialization was regarded as an act commanded by the Christian faith. As far as pagan cults and customs found among the so-called 'savages' were concerned, the task was to overcome paganism by means of the message of the church, and, where this was not possible, by the use of force. The history of Latin America is a devastating example of this.

This problem arose also for Protestant missions of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. On the one hand, missionaries were convinced that the Word of God as such has the power to change people and cultures from the inside out, while at the same time they needed to respect the people who are reached by this Word. This often resulted in an ambivalence between solidarity with the peoples and churches in the missionary countries and the simultaneous need to use the infrastructure of the respective European colonial powers as a shelter for their own missionary activities. The ambivalence addressed here permeates the newer history of missions in the tension be-

tween colonialism and non-violent proclamation of the Christian faith.

However, an essential motivation for identifying with the contemporary colonial leaders of the European states came from the conviction of the superiority of western civilization, which was shared by both the colonial powers and the missionaries. They wanted to use the gospel to teach the underdeveloped peoples the benefits of the western world in the fields of school, business, politics, healthcare, and technological infrastructure.

2. Slave trade and slavery

A particularly intense point of conflict in this respect was the slave trade, which was carried out by the white 'christianized' peoples with the aid of Arab merchants. A number of pseudo-biblical reasons often served to justify imperial racism. One of these was the curse which Noah had pronounced upon his son Ham (Gen 9:25f.). Black Africans were regarded as descendants of Ham and were therefore subjected to the rule of Shem. This primitive logic was used to justify the subjugation and exploitation of the Africans.

Then there were references to the practice of slavery, both in the Old and New Testaments, not least in the practice of the Roman Empire. It was pointed out that Paul, for example, nowhere prohibited slavery or called for a slave riot. It was, however, certainly overlooked precisely how the apostle to the Gentiles dissolved the principle of slavery from within through the spiritual power of the Christian communities in his letter to Philemon.

In the more recent history of missions, besides the effort to mitigate the effects of slavery, we find also the firm determination to abolish slavery altogether. At the same time, however, there was always the temptation to at least partially secure the economic advantages of slavery.

3. Marriage, family and the status of women

Another field of conflict was raised with regard to the question of marriage and the family. What had to be changed with regard to the biblical order of creation? How can a monogamous relationship between man and woman be achieved, for example, in a polygamous society with its social structures and customs?

The missionaries realized very quickly that they could not simply plant the Christian model of marriage instantaneously in a completely differently structured culture and society. Only if one accepted the existing structures with a certain flexibility and gradually transformed them into Christian marriage was there a realistic chance for long-term change.

A very significant model for this missionary practice is already found in Titus 1:5-9, where Paul, in his exhortation to the elders and bishops in verse 6, explicitly says that the bishop should be 'husband of one wife' (or 'a man of one woman'). This means that, in many of the Pauline missionary churches, there were polygamous relationships which continued to exist even after conversion and baptism. However, the community leader should be characterized by the fact that he lived in an exemplary way in a monogamous marriage.

In this way, the apostle was able to

change the social structure of the entire church over one or two generations so that Christian marriage and family were the result of this development. In many respects, this cautious and sensitive handling of the problem also applies to recent missionary history.

An important issue in this context was the question of the role of women in church and society. Especially in societies that were strictly patriarchal in structure, the focus was on emphasizing the dignity and equality of women and instilling these values in their minds and also putting them into practice.

4. Finance and work ethics

A further missiological problem was the question of the financing of mission work. At first, the missionaries were supported materially by the monetary offerings from Germany and other western countries, in order to be able to finance the construction and maintenance of mission stations.

In the era of advanced colonialism, the missionaries were tempted to participate fully in the economic privileges of the white population in African and Asian countries. Thus, the missionaries belonged to the social upper class and at least indirectly also benefited from the exploitation of the natives by the colonial administration. However, many of the missionaries, especially from so-called faith missions, deliberately did without the prerogatives of colonialism to lead lifestyles more in solidarity with the indigenous population.

With regard to money and in the broader sense of work ethics, there was also a considerable amount of con-

flict. Missionaries attempted to teach the African and Asian populations European work disciplines and how to build up reliable financial administrations, not least with the goal that, in the longer term, the young churches could be independent financially. It is precisely in this respect that the difficult balancing act between the western feeling of superiority and solidarity with the indigenous population is shown again.

5. The Enlightenment and liberal theology

European-American colonial history cannot be understood without the background of the European Enlightenment of the 18th century. However, at this point, the distance between the missionary work of Pietist-Evangelical provenance and the intellectual leadership in the colonial territories is particularly intense. The Revival movement of the nineteenth century was theologically in deep conflict with the so-called 'neology', that is, with the liberal theology of Protestantism shaped by the Enlightenment.

It was true that the scientific and technological knowledge that emerged from the Enlightenment was adopted and used, but, at the same time, Pietist-Evangelical missionaries strongly resisted enlightenment theology that was critical of the Bible.

This situation is of great relevance to the history of missions as the young churches of Africa and Asia, as well as Latin America, were definitely shaped by the Revival movement and Bible-oriented Protestantism. Many tensions, especially in the so-called 'mainline churches', that is, the large traditional

churches in Europe, such as Lutheranism, the Reformed Churches, Methodism, the Baptists, etc., are divided today between conservative and liberal positions.

The young churches of the global south, which are growing strongly, are clearly keeping their distance from the northern liberal churches and risk dividing the church rather than adopt liberal positions.

6. Missions as an ecumenical impulse

Finally, it is significant that the ecumenical movement, in the context of evangelical missions of the nineteenth century, was of great importance precisely in view of the 'pure proclamation' of the gospel.

With its founding in 1846, the Evangelical Alliance succeeded for the first time in modern church history in building a fundamental bridge between all branches of the three main streams of the Reformation of the 16th century. Christians from Lutheranism, the Reformed Churches, and the Anabaptist free-church movements met in the Evangelical Alliance. They were thereby instrumental in preparing the first World Missions Conference in Edinburgh as a missiological enterprise.

Modern ecumenism has one of its decisive impulses in world mission. This was because it was increasingly recognized that, in the missionary countries, the confessional divisions within Christendom were a serious obstacle to the faithful proclamation of the gospel. To have overcome these confessional divisions, which had emerged from the 16th and especially the 17th century, is one of the great achievements of the modern Evangelical mission movement.

VII Summary

1. Contextualization as God's risk

We must be careful not to judge the new missionary movement in an a-historical manner from the position of an abstract idealism. Rather, it is a matter of God's way to speak his word into the various human contexts, even at the risk that the contextualization can sometimes lead to serious errors and delusions.

But a church free of context is, from the theological grounds given above, neither possible nor worthy of pursuit because it would contradict the essence of God's revelation. Rather, the real issue is the struggle between textual contextualization and the overcoming of unbiblical contextualization attempts.

2. Missions in the tension between adaptation and contradiction

Specifically, the extent to which individual missionary societies and individual missionaries yielded to the temptations of European progress and colonialism is shown in contradictory fashion in mission-historical reality. The spectrum ranges from a self-critical distance from its own western culture to a naive acceptance of the aims of colonialism along with its repressive politics.

3. Intercultural flexibility and the pure gospel

The overall result is that the question of a pure proclamation of the gospel in missions is confronted by highly contradictory and complex contexts in which a high degree of flexibility and intercultural reflection is required. The flexibility in cross-cultural work must always be bound to the one pure gospel of the justification of the sinner by grace alone.

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The Homiletic Window: A model for reflective preaching praxis

Myles MacBean

It may be true that the death of the sermon has been greatly exaggerated, but there is significant ongoing debate concerning the priority of preaching for the church, and in particular about the function, form and foundation of preaching.[1] Although some contend that preaching has diminishing relevance to our contemporary lifestyles, others argue that it is not only biblical but uniquely effective across time and culture as a communication tool.[2]

This paper presents a simple model, called the Homiletic Window, designed to facilitate reflective practice among preachers and to aid their training.

The model synthesises several of the key dimensions of preaching to create an intuitive visual tool. It gives preachers a simple descriptive vocabulary to help them develop greater confidence and intentionality about why and how they preach.

Small-scale tests of this tool in England and Malawi have demonstrated its potential, indicated where further work would be beneficial, and provided useful preliminary insight into the practical perspectives of evangelical preachers in two very different cultures.

I Components of the Model

The model synthesises three key dimensions of analysis within its framework.

1. Foundation

A clear understanding of the theological foundation and scope of preaching is of critical importance for preachers. Alec Motyer provides a sound starting point for evangelicals, asserting

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1 Kenton C. Anderson, *Choosing to Preach: A Comprehensive Introduction to Sermon Options and Structures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 30.
2 Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority: Fourth Edition Revised and with New Sermons* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 5–11; John R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 15–91; Christopher Ash, *The Priority of Preaching* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications; London: Proclamation Trust Media, 2009), 27–28.

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that 'the *content* of preaching is the Bible' and 'the *objective* of preaching is application'.[3]

Certainly, most evangelical commentators see strong biblical support for the foundational definition of preaching as bringing 'out of Scripture what is there' so lives might be changed.[4] The Homiletic Window therefore presupposes the foundation of preaching as (a) exposition of biblical truth so that (b) lives might see 'gospel transformation'.[5]

Nevertheless, the ongoing debate over such matters as the validity of 'new homiletics' shows that this foundational definition is, in itself, an insufficient basis for an analytical model of preaching.[6]

2. Function

One notable area of debate among homiletic scholars concerns whether the function of preaching is predominantly to proclaim eternal truth or to care for the congregation.[7] Thomas G. Long recognises these two options in his first two 'master' metaphors for preaching: 'Herald' and 'Pastor'.[8] (For the benefit of alliteration, the Homiletic Window uses 'Proclaimer' instead of 'Herald'.)

The Proclaimer metaphor for preaching, arguably championed by Barth, was dominant in the first half of the twentieth century. Motyer sees a strong biblical basis for this function, pointing for example to the dominant use of 'declarative' verbs when describing the nature of preaching.[9]

Commentators value also this metaphor's emphasis on the 'transcendental' message contained in preaching.[10] However, others voice concern that this metaphor has simply 'accommodated itself to cultural norms' and lacks sufficient focus on the audience, leading to a risk that the preacher will fail to answer the questions in the audience's heart.[11]

The Pastor metaphor can be seen as the other end of the spectrum regarding the function of preaching. This perspective, though not new, appears to have gained traction in the mid-twentieth century. While still recognising the centrality of scripture, the Pastor 'focusses on the listener' and on the opportunity for a 'beneficial change in the

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3 J. A. Motyer, *Preaching? Simple Teaching on Simply Preaching* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 89; Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 19–29; W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Construction* (Basingstoke: Pickering and Inglis, 1985), 31.

4 William Corus, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon, Late Senior Fellow of King's College and Minister of Trinity Church, Cambridge: With a Selection from His Writings and Correspondence* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1848), 494.

5 Tim Hawkins, *Messages That Move: How to Give Bible Talks That Challenge and Inspire* (Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2013), 24; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 57.

6 Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm, 'New Hermeneutic, New Homiletic, and New Directions: An U.S.-North American Perspective', *Homiletic*, 35/1 (2010), 19–20.

7 Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 47, 69.

8 Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd edn (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 19.

9 Motyer, *Preaching?* 103.

10 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 23–24.

11 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 21–27.

hearer'.[12] Again, a biblical basis can be argued for this model, as the apostles were clearly sensitive to their audience (e.g. tailoring their message to either Jews or Gentiles, as shown in Acts 17) and maintaining a strong focus on the listener's change of heart (e.g. Acts 17:30).

However, this metaphor also carries risks, as too heavily highlighting this aspect of preaching and love for the audience can result in distorted or weak theology, anthropomorphic utilitarianism, and an overemphasis on the preacher.[13] Taken to an extreme, this approach could become 'preaching as counselling'.[14]

3. Form

The third component of preaching handled by the Homiletic Window tackles 'the hot topic in homiletic literature for the last several decades': what form a sermon should take,[15] or, more specifically, which of man's two basic thought patterns, inductive or deductive logic, should be considered the norm for true expository preaching.[16] In view of this debate, it is useful that Long extends his list of metaphors of preaching to include 'storyteller/poet' and 'philosopher'.[17]

Long's Poet is seen as practising an inductive form of preaching that 'moves from the particular of experience … to a general truth or conclusion'.[18] Again, this approach is not uniquely modern, as even some of the early church fathers rejected the deductive 'rhetorical forms' of their day.[19] However, it returned to prominence in the 1970s in the 'paradigmatic shift' championed by Fred Craddock and others.[20]

A major perceived strength of this form of preaching is its ability to serve the Proclaimer function by enabling faithfulness to both the message of a passage and the 'rhetorical form in which it is found', while also allowing the Pastor to create a 'common world of experience' for his community.[21] However, though this form of sermon can 'create interest', it also risks leaving people confused about the message, underplaying the 'nonnarrative dimensions of scripture', and emphasising 'religious experience' over truth.[22]

In contrast to the Poet, the Philosopher form is rooted in Greek rhetoric and emphasises deductive 'clarity and rationality'. Clearly suitable to 'communicate a central thesis or idea', this 'traditional homiletic form' is seen as

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12 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 28.

13 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 35, 33, 34.

14 Edmund Holt Linn, *Preaching as Counselling: The Unique Method of Harry Emerson Fosdick* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1966).

15 Dennis M. Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching: Theory and Practice in Sermon Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 18.

16 Ralph L. Lewis and Gregg Lewis, *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1983), 35.

17 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 36.

18 Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 47.

19 Lucy Hogan, 'Creation of Form', in Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 137.

20 Eugene L. Lowry, 'The Revolution of Sermonic Shape', in *Listening to the Word* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 95; Cahill, *Shape of Preaching*, 18; Craddock, *As One without Authority*.

21 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 42–43.

22 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 44–45.

championed by those who would contend that preaching 'ceases to be biblical if it is nondirective'.[23]

Many see a scriptural basis for the deductive form in the tight logic of Paul's letters, the way in which he 'reasoned' with Jew and Gentile (*dialogomai*, see Acts 17–18), and his emphasis on 'rightly dividing the word of truth' (2 Tim 2:15, AV). However, it is difficult to find clear examples of this sermon form in Scripture.

The enduring popularity of this form is due, at least partly, to the way in which it creates a 'content-driven sermon' that is clearly able to 'communicate the doctrines of the church' and handle logic-dominated passages such as Paul's epistles.[24] Nevertheless, this form also risks failing to 'connect with the text itself' or with the listener, and it can slip from preaching (an 'appeal to people's will') into mere teaching of facts.[25]

II Synthesis of the Model

Reflection on these three key aspects of preaching (foundation, function and form) suggests that all three can be recognised as distinct, independent dimensions of analysis. Although evangelicals who recognise the priority of preaching might overwhelmingly agree that the foundation of preaching is ex-

position, they may also take different positions on the appropriate function of the preacher as Proclaimer or Pastor. Similarly, both Proclaimers and Pastors might, at least in principle, favour either the Poet or Philosopher form as best suited for their preaching.

All four metaphors have plausible biblical support and practical strengths as well as weaknesses. We can conclude that each metaphor has much to commend it and, if correctly handled, is not inconsistent with the expositional foundation of preaching.

1. Mission

Indeed, in an attempt to resolve this question of the meaning of preaching, Long argued that the definitive 'image' or metaphor of preaching should be the 'witness' which 'encompasses' all the others and 'holds … in creative tension' the various elements we have looked at so far.[26] Among the biblical support for this image, we could cite Paul's call to 'testify to the good news of God's grace' (Acts 20:24). The verb is *diamarturomai*, to testify or give witness.

The Witness can therefore be seen as having the authority of the Proclaimer, not based on a (potentially dangerous) personal authority, but rather on the 'borrowed authority' of what the Witness has seen in Scripture.[27] The Witness displays also the 'sensitivity to human need' of the Pastor while recognising the need to witness to truth; moreover, he or she pays attention to the inductive art of the Poet 'without

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23 Cahill, *Shape of Preaching*, 20, 21; Derek J. Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 118.

24 Simon Vibert, *Excellence in Preaching: Learning from the Best* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 58; Cahill, *Shape of Preaching*, 27.

25 Cahill, *Shape of Preaching*, 27; Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 119.

26 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 45.

27 Ash, *Priority of Preaching*, 43.

allowing form to control content'.[28]

Indeed, this witness metaphor can be seen as encapsulating the independent dimensions of function and form and presenting a useful, overarching mission for preaching.

2. Balanced homiletics

The analysis so far suggests the model of the Homiletic Window shown in Figure 1.
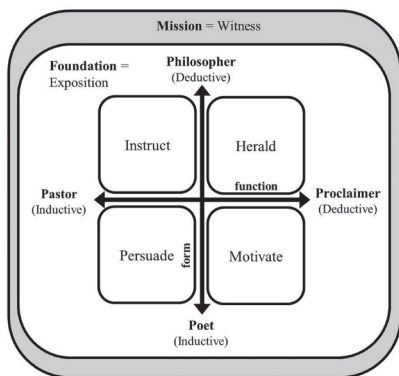

Figure 1

Here, function and form are depicted as two independent and orthogonal dimensions of analysis, each lying between two cardinal points. In addition, each quadrant of function and form can now clearly be visualised as consistent with the foundation of exposition and the mission of bearing witness.

The model allows for the fact that, although some may consider their particular position among these four quadrants normative or 'the only viable approach to faithful preaching', most preachers would 'resist being tagged'

with any of the labels and prefer 'to see [themselves] as a creative blend of them all'.[29]

The Homiletic Window thus has clear parallels with personality profiling models such as Myers-Briggs' or Kolb's learning styles. Each model recognises that individuals might feel most comfortable with certain personality types, learning methods or preaching styles, but that a mature practitioner will recognise the benefits of situational flexibility and incorporate aspects of all styles.[30]

Thus the term, 'balanced homiletic', might be usefully coined to reflect such a well-rounded approach, according to which the preacher selects, for each sermon, the particular combination of function and form that best suits the preacher's gifts and personality, the audience and the message.

In agreement with many prominent expository preachers who recognise the need for gospel-centred balance in these matters,[31] the Homiletic Window usefully visualises the need for a balanced homiletic practised by a balanced witness.

3. Integrative homiletics

From a different starting point, in 2006 Kenton Anderson derived a similar

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28 Wilbert M. Van Dyk, 'The Witness of Preaching', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 25/2 (1990), 290.

29 Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 42, 45.
30 Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter B. Myers, *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type* (Mountain View: CPP, 1995); David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984).
31 Robert A. Allen, 'Preaching Inductively as One with Authority', *Preaching.com*, 1 September 2000, www.preaching.com/resources/articles/11565702/.

model to the Homiletic Window, with the added insight that each of the function-form quadrants can be seen as mapping onto Kolb's learning cycle as follows:

> The Proclaimer-Philosopher maps onto Kolb's 'assimilator' and aims to *herald* the message by 'making an argument' through a 'declarative sermon' which explains 'the need of the listener to submit to the person and will of God'.[32]

> The Proclaimer-Poet maps onto Kolb's 'diverger' and aims to *motivate* by 'painting a picture' through a 'visionary sermon' that creates 'an experience that inspires the listener to a resolution of his or her felt needs'.[33]

> The Pastor-Poet maps onto Kolb's 'accommodator' and aims to *persuade* by 'telling a story' through a 'narrative sermon' to 'bring the listener to submission'.[34]

> The Pastor-Philosopher maps onto Kolb's 'converger' and aims to *instruct* by solving practical problems through a 'pragmatic sermon' that makes possible 'an enhanced life situation'.[35]

Anderson also pointed out that a preacher's preferred style will not be aligned with the learning preferences of all members of a congregation. Hence, those preachers who 'want to speak powerfully' to all their listeners should strive for a balanced homiletics, such that over a period of time a given congregation hears sermons preached from different quadrants of the Homiletic Window.[36] However, crucially, Anderson further argues for the challenging model of an 'integrative sermon' in which the preacher moves through all the homiletic quadrants within a single message.[37]

III First Case Study: England

The Homiletic Window was tested in a small-scale case study to determine: (a) if there is a relationship between a preacher's view of the function of the sermon and the preferred form of the sermon, (b) whether the model adequately described preachers' actual practice, and (c) the feasibility of using a simple quantitative questionnaire to help preachers characterise their preferred preaching style.

The participants in this case study were four preachers from a single fellowship of pastors in the UK. All four were theologically evangelical but came from a wide variety of church traditions and could have been expected to exhibit a variety of attitudes to the function and form of preaching.

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32 Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 133; Kenton Anderson, 'Mapping the Landscape of Preaching Today', *Preaching.org*, 4 March 2011, www.preaching.org/mapping-the-landscape-of-preaching-today/.

33 Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 211; Anderson, 'Mapping the Landscape of Preaching Today'.

34 Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 185; Anderson, 'Mapping the Landscape of Preaching Today'.

35 Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 161; Anderson, 'Mapping the Landscape of Preaching Today'.

36 Anderson, 'Mapping the Landscape of Preaching Today'.

37 Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 235.

1. Method

The chosen methodology allowed for triangulation between three distinct sets of data:

(a) Qualitative information gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews with the preachers, after which the interview transcripts were analysed using thick description and a simple coding model.

(b) Quantitative data captured from the preachers through written questions, using both a matrix question format and a semantic differential scale format to test construct validity.

(c) Qualitative deductions by the researcher based on the review of three sets of sermon notes provided by each preacher.

The semi-structured interview included open questions concerning what the preacher considered the key foundational principle on which preaching is built; how the preacher understood the term, 'expository preaching'; what was the main function or objective of a sermon; and the ideal form or structure that a sermon should take.

The interview then moved on to the questionnaire, which started by asking the preacher to respond on a four-point rating scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) to the statement that the foundation of preaching is: 'exposition' of biblical truth so that lives might be changed.

The questionnaire then proceeded to evaluate the preacher's perspective on the function of preaching. First, five-point semantic differential questions were posed, using four pairs of opposing phrases to differentiate between Pastor and Proclaimer characteristics. An example of these questions was, 'As you prepare and write your sermon, how much consideration do you give to "addressing people's needs" versus "speaking the message clearly"?'

These same eight phrases were then used to create eight questions in a five-point matrix question format, i.e., 'On a scale of one to five, as you prepare and write your sermon, how much consideration do you give to addressing people's needs?'

Next, a similar set of semantic differential and matrix questions was used to identify the preacher's perspective regarding the desirable form of a sermon. For example: 'As you think about the structure and language how much consideration do you give to "God experienced" versus "God understood"?' Another question asked how much the preacher considers appealing to the listeners' 'feeling' versus 'thinking'.

2. Results

The structured interviews and the sermon notes produced a rich, nuanced set of qualitative data that was well suited to the document analysis techniques. The data produced an assessment of each preacher's position in the Homiletic Window. The quantitative data were appropriately aggregated and normalised to produce the separate quantitative coordinates shown in Figure 2, which represent the data for the four participants expressed as standardised Cartesian coordinates within the Homiletic Window.

Metric	Preacher							
	A		B		C		D	
	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
Quant 1 (Matrix)	0.25	0.60	0.20	0.15	0.45	0.40	0.35	0.30
Quant 2 (Semantic)	0.92	0.40	0.08	0.27	1.00	0.87	0.75	0.60
Quant Average (1)	0.58	0.50	0.14	0.21	0.73	0.63	0.55	0.45
Qual Average (2)	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.65	0.40	0.15	0.70	-0.20

Figure 2

Graphic techniques were used to facilitate comparison and analysis. Figure 3 compares the results for quantitative measure 1 (matrix questions) and quantitative measure 2 (semantic differential questions) for each of the four preachers.
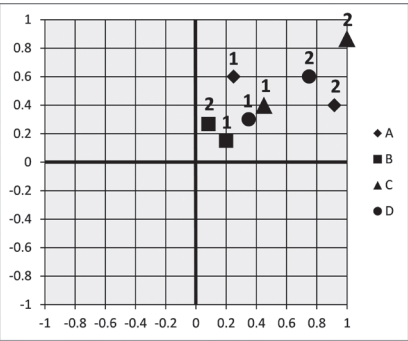
Figure 4

Figure 3

Similarly, Figure 4 compares the average of the two quantitative measures with my judgement of the preacher's position on the Homiletic Window, based on all the qualitative data.
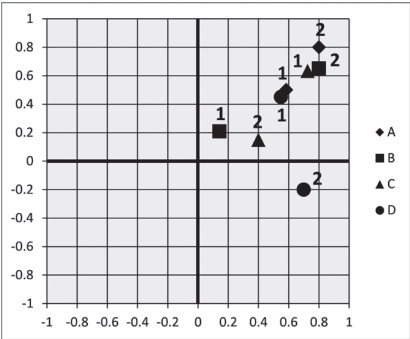
3. Evaluation

The qualitative data showed universally strong support for the proposition that the foundation of preaching was exposition. Indeed, unprompted qualitative input supported a narrower definition of preaching as expounding a particular passage rather than just 'biblical truth'. For example, Preacher B stated that the foundation of preaching is the 'declaration and teaching and application of God's Word', and 'the exposition of the text'. Qualitative data also showed a strong emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the listener's

transformation. Preacher D provided a typical comment: 'It is not my issue whether God is experienced, it is the Holy Spirit's'.

Based on this feedback, it could be argued that a more useful foundational definition of preaching is (a) expositing the original message of a biblical text and (b) communicating that message to today's audience so that (c) the Holy Spirit might change lives.

We will now consider the implications of these data for the three research questions listed above.

a) Relationship between function and form

The wide scattering of data points from this very small-scale project (see Figure 3) makes it impossible to reach any definitive conclusions on the exact relationship between a preacher's perspective on the function and on the form of sermons. However, broadly speaking, the preachers are clearly clustered in the Herald (Proclaimer-Philosopher) quadrant (see Figure 4). These results might suggest that those who view preaching as primarily about the exposition of a specific Bible passage will also have a propensity to take a Herald approach to preaching.

There was certainly a broad trend in the group towards the deductive Philosopher approach to the form of a sermon. Preacher A was perhaps the most outspoken, declaring that 'God can't be experienced unless he is understood' and that, with regard to the storytelling capacity of a Poet, he 'couldn't give a tuppence'.

Interestingly, while the preachers studied saw 'potential danger' (Preacher B's phrase) in taking too strong a Pastor perspective on the function of preaching, the quantitative and qualitative data did show that each preacher had some Pastor characteristics. However, this tendency appears to have been more associated with the preacher's recognition of the importance of understanding the audience so as to effectively communicate and apply a Bible-based message to the congregation, rather than with any intent to derive the message from the audience's perceived needs.

Further work would be required to properly investigate this research question, first with additional preachers from a much wider range of theological and denominational backgrounds so as to test the model's effectiveness in identifying preachers in other quadrants, and second with a variety of researchers so as to test the reliability of assessments using this model.

b) Adequacy of the conceptual model

The preachers expressed clear enthusiasm about the Homiletic Window during the semi-structured interviews, and their readiness to use the model to articulate their own homiletic practice suggested that it authentically captures many of the key aspects of their conceptual framework. Preacher D, for instance, described the model as encouraging intentional reflection ('This is really useful. It makes me think') and supporting improvement ('If you practice golf on your own, you are only practicing your own mistakes').

However, there was no clear evidence that preachers implement any form of 'balanced homiletic', let alone the 'integrative' model proposed by Anderson. Most preachers appeared to vary their sermon form over a relative-

ly narrow range; recognised that they had a natural 'comfort zone' based on personality, training and experience; and saw time pressure as limiting their creativity. Preacher A said, 'I am more comfortable [preaching like] Paul. That is my natural inclination and personality'; Preacher D observed that 'when you have three sermons to give each week you … don't have the luxury of thinking all this through'.

All four preachers also stressed that the form of the passage strongly influenced the form of the sermon. However, this emphasis, which would be commended by the literature, did not seem particularly evident in the pastors' sample sermons.[38]

Although generalisation from such a small number of participants is not possible, the case study indicates that the Homiletic Window has considerable value and promise beyond the particular situation being examined, including as a framework for reflection on and more intentional analysis of homiletic matters.

c) The questionnaire as an analytical tool

The significant variation in the results for the same participant on different question formats (see Figure 3) raises serious questions concerning the reliability of the quantitative questionnaire. The instruments would need significant further work involving multiple researchers to evaluate such concerns as test-retest reliability and inter-rater reliability.

Additionally, the significant variance between the average of the quantitative measures and my own assessment of their qualitative data (see Figure 4) further indicates that this early version of the questionnaire has questionable instrument validity.

Nevertheless, given the constraints of such a small-scale project, the fact that the different measures of a particular pastor's preferences sit in the same quadrant of the Homiletic Window suggests that the quantitative instruments do have promise. To gain further confidence in their reliability, further studies would need to use additional evaluators to gain better baseline data, followed by multivariate testing of the quantitative questions to tune the instrument.

IV Second Case Study: Malawi

A second case study used a group of Malawian preachers as subjects. From the limited literature on sub-Saharan preaching styles and related work on learning styles, one might expect preachers in this geographic area—especially those who are less educated and from a more rural environment—to exhibit a higher tendency towards the Persuade preaching style than the UK preachers.[39] This expectation is due to the predominantly oral communication traditions of the region and the reported cultural tendency towards 'field-dependent' and 'concrete' learning styles.[40]

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38 See for example Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

39 Bishop Eben Kanukayi Nhiwatiwa, *Preaching in the African Context: How We Preach* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources International, 2012), 31.

40 Pat Guild, 'The Culture/Learning Style

This case study therefore aimed to use the Homiletic Window model to (a) systematically evaluate the preferred preaching styles of a group of sub-Saharan preachers and (b) compare preferences between the Malawian and the British preachers.

1. Method

The evaluation group for this second case study consisted of 81 preachers from the largest explicitly evangelical denomination in Malawi. Questionnaires were administered at three different local presbytery-like meetings in different parts of Malawi. Some 60% of the group were church elders, and the remaining 40% were ordained pastors; more than 80% of the participants were from rural settings.

In the sub-Saharan context, church elders reportedly preach over 80% of all sermons.[41] Within the present sample, some 30% of church elders had no more than a period of primary-level formal education and 55% had no more than a period of secondary education. On the other hand, most pastors in the group had some form of undergraduate

certificate or diploma in biblical studies. Nevertheless, only 7% held a relevant qualification at the degree level or above.

To evaluate individuals' preferred preaching style, after a brief introduction to the topic, each member of the group was asked to complete the semantic differential version of the quantitative questions described above. These questions formed part of a larger survey which had previously been carefully translated into the national language, Chichewa, by a local pastor-theologian.

2. Results

Many of those attending the meetings failed to complete the survey, so data for only 51 preachers (72% of the original sample) were available for further analysis. The results for this study group are summarised in Figure 5 below.
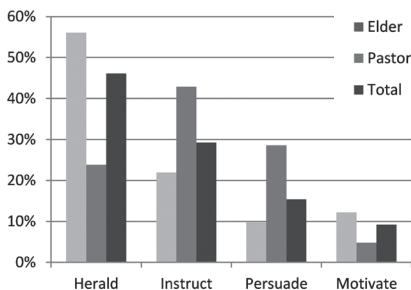
Figure 5

3. Evaluation

Like the results in the UK, these results from Malawi must be considered preliminary given the provisional nature of the quantitative tool used, the relatively small size of the case study

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Connection', *Educating for Diversity*, 51/8 (1994), 16–21; James A. Anderson, 'Cognative Styles and Multicultural Populations', *Journal of Teacher Education*, 39/1 (1988), 6–7.

41 Davidson Kamayaya Chifungo, 'An Oral Hermeneutics within the Lay Preaching Context of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP): A Critical Evaluation' (PhD Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2013), 51; Keith B. Anderson, 'Meeting Community Needs through Theological Education by Extension', in *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension*, ed. by F. Ross Kinsler (Geneva: WCC Publications, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), 149.

group, and the group members' association with a single denomination in a single sub-Saharan country. Nevertheless, some useful insights can be derived regarding the two key research questions posed in this second case study.

Figure 5 shows that, whereas all four British pastors preferred the Herald preaching style, all preaching styles in the Homiletic Window were represented in the preferences of the group of Malawian preachers.

More extensive study with a larger sample and a wider range of church traditions would be required to reach any definitive conclusions as to whether this apparent cross-cultural difference indeed exists and, if so, what is driving it. Nevertheless, it could be tentatively proposed that, even among self-identifying evangelicals, socio-cultural influences in general and the underlying orality of the Malawian culture in particular make Malawian preachers more open to the congregation's theological needs (the sermon function of Pastor) and learning styles (the sermon form of Poet). These results would, at least partially, confirm the expectations in the literature.

At the same time, however, Figure 5 also displays the significant propensity, especially among elders, towards the Herald preaching style. This propensity is far greater than might be expected from the literature.

Again, no definitive conclusions can be obtained, but the strong conservative and evangelical culture of the denomination studied might predispose its leaders towards a Philosopher approach to preaching, even if the typical congregational member might typically have an 'accommodator' learning pref-

erence and hence be more receptive to the Poet style of communication. Perhaps, even sub-consciously, this denomination's culture might also be conforming to the historical preaching styles of its founding western missionaries, who established the church in Malawi during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Educational culture might be another factor. Although undereducated by western standards, these elders and pastors are better educated than the vast majority of Malawians, and they have been educated in a relatively traditional system that would reward those who have an 'assimilator' learning style. It might be expected, therefore, that these more educated elders and pastors would reflect their preferred learning style in their preaching style.

However, Figure 5 shows also clear differences between the preferences of the pastors and the elders, with the less educated elders having a significantly greater propensity to prefer a Herald style and the better-educated Pastors having a greater propensity towards an Instruct or even a Persuade preaching style. This result would seem contrary to expectations. It could be that the ministerial studies of Pastors encourage them to give more consideration to the perceived needs of the congregation (i.e. the Pastor view of sermon function) and the orality of their congregation (i.e. the Poet view of sermon form).

V Conclusions and Recommendations

Preaching remains a significant part of the life of the church globally and

occupies a major part of church leaders' responsibilities. Although further work would be required to refine and validate the quantitative instruments presented, this initial study suggests that the Homiletic Window captures many aspects of the conceptual framework used by evangelical preachers. The model might therefore be usefully considered for inclusion within formal homiletics training to encourage greater intentionality in preaching style. Further field research with a larger number of UK preachers would also be highly beneficial.

The qualitative results from the UK point towards refining the definition of preaching as 'exposing the original message of a biblical text and communicating that message to today's audience so that the Holy Spirit might change lives'. This definition might benefit from further scholarly analysis.

The very small-scale UK study found all four participants preferring a Herald preaching style, and the qualitative data indicated a preference for a narrow comfort zone based on personality, training and experience. This comfort zone is likely to be mismatched with the varied learning styles expected among any western group of listeners. Although this group may not be representative of all evangelical preachers in the UK, training of preachers could benefit from using the Homiletic Window to sensitise preachers to their own preferred preaching style, help them understand the probable varied learning styles of their listeners, and encourage a more intentionally balanced approach in their preaching series and even in the construction of each sermon.

Although the Malawian preachers displayed various preaching styles, the Herald style remained predominant. Whatever the cause of this trend, in a sub-Saharan context this preaching preference will probably be significantly mismatched to the needs of rural congregations, which are likely to have a preponderance of members with 'accommodator' learning styles. It might therefore be even more pressing in Africa than in the UK for Bible colleges to consider using the Homiletic Window to train preachers in a more balanced homiletics.

Furthermore, elders might gain the greatest benefit from such training, since they have the higher preference for the Herald preaching style. Since the vast majority of sermons are delivered by elders, placing a greater priority on training elders in preaching could be a fruitful investment. It is unfortunate that most of the elders reported having received no training in preaching whatsoever, or at most a short session many years earlier. It would appear critical for the church in sub-Saharan Africa to continue its long search for a truly contextual, scalable and sustainable approach to training grass-roots preachers right where they live, work and serve.

In the context of the training of preachers, these results would appear to reinforce the statement a decade ago by Paul Bowers that 'Theological education matters, for God's good purpose in Africa. To my mind in this day, in this hour, on this continent, there is really no higher calling.'[42]

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42 Paul Bowers, 'Theological Education in Africa: Why Does It Matter?' (presented at the Theological Education Consultation, Honeydew, South Africa, 2007), 7.

Christianity and the Profession of Arms

Colonel Craig Bickell, CSM

The Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.[1] (Field Marshal Sir William Slim)

I Introduction

In 2002, as a young captain, I had the opportunity to visit the Army Recruit Training Centre in Kapooka, New South Wales, Australia, for the first time. At the time I was escorting the Minister for Defence, and part of the itinerary included a visit to the chapel, which had been constructed by Army sappers in 1993. While I was not a Christian at that time (although I had been regularly attending church for a decade), what caught my interest was the image on the stained glass window illustrated in Figure 1. The image depicts a soldier in a scene that would resonate with many Australians who have served in the Army.

The soldier has clearly travelled a great distance, perhaps patrolling, and possibly under some threat from an unseen foe. During his patrol he has been burdened by a heavy pack which he can no longer carry. The pack is symbolic of the weight, not only of the duties and responsibilities he bears, but also of the guilt he feels—guilt for the acts and omissions arising from the sinfulness and rejection of God that the Bible and human history and experience tell us is common to all mankind. That weight is now too great for him to carry. He can go no further. He has placed his pack on the ground and kneels, clearly exhausted.

The pack appears not to have been simply discarded, but placed carefully, deliberately on a hill. Perhaps he saw the hill from a long way off and made his way towards it. Perhaps he stumbled across it as he stared, fixated on the ground in front of him in his weariness, shuffling forward, one foot in front of the other. More importantly, he has placed his pack at the foot of a cross on which a man—Jesus Christ—has been hung, crucified, in an extreme, violent act of punishment. The

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1 Field Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Papermac, 1986), 183.

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Figure 1. A stained glass window in the Soldiers' Chapel at Kapooka depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the surrender of a soldier to Him.

soldier is looking up, expectantly, his expression conveying a question. He appears to be asking the silent figure: 'Can you take up my burden for me?' The image gnawed at my conscience. I could relate to the soldier depicted in the image. But I had never really asked Christ the same question. Could I? Some months later I would.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms. The article will outline the challenge to the profession of arms identified in a recent *Quadrant* article by Professor Michael Evans and briefly address the limitations of his proposed solution—the embracement of stoicism by its members. The article will then argue the case for the enduring value

of the Christian faith to the profession of arms.

II The Problem for the Profession of Arms and the Limitations of Stoicism

Professor Michael Evans claims that the greatest challenge to the western profession of arms emanates from the rise of a selfish society with a deep adherence to moral relativism. He describes a culture in which a 'tsunami of secularism and moral decline … has left us with a public culture dominated by effete celebrities and corporate billionaires united by their lack of civic virtue' and in which shame has been abolished. Evans implies—correctly in my view—that this leaves those in the

profession of arms with little armour to protect their inner selves.[2]

The solution, according to Evans, is to embrace the moral philosophy of the ancient Greek and Roman Stoics. I agree with Evans' diagnosis of the problem and its consequences for the profession of arms, but disagree with his proposed solution—the embrace of stoicism by the military professional. The aim of this essay is not to critique stoicism or compare its value with that of the Christian faith. However, my understanding of stoicism is that it is inherently focussed on the self and sets a standard of behaviour that is compromised by the human condition.

It also fails to deal with the two questions in every soldier's mind posed by the reality of the battlefield: what happens when I am killed, and what happens to the person whose life I take in carrying out my orders? In addition to answering those soldiers' questions, I believe that the Christian faith, based on the Bible, provides sound instruction in the eight moral lessons that Evans attributes to stoicism.

I also believe that the Bible is equally effective in posing to the military professional the seven choices Evans describes as stoic. It is also interesting and illustrative of the enduring value of the Christian faith that many of the examples Evans uses as evidence to support or illustrate his argument in favour of stoicism are derived from individuals who, as indicated in the words attributed to them, either are Christian or at least acknowledge God. These include the author of the American Civil War

Soldier's Prayer and Brigadier General Henning von Tresckow of the German resistance to Hitler.

III The Christian Faith

As a Christian—or a believer in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour—I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the saviour prophesied in the Old Testament. I believe that he was crucified on a cross as a sacrificial act of atonement to take the punishment for mine and all humanity's rejection of God and all its consequences. I believe that, in dying on the cross, and through my asking God for forgiveness for my sins through this sacrificial death, Jesus Christ saved me from the punishment that will be meted out on the Day of Judgement referred to in the Bible. I believe that, on the third day after his death, he was resurrected, thus demonstrating his victory over sin and death, and is now seated at the right hand of God and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

That judgement day will be completely just and worse and more effective than any interrogation human beings are capable of, in that all resistance will be ineffective and all our secrets will be revealed. I believe that Christ's kingdom—defined as a kingdom of believers and not geopolitical boundaries—is being spread throughout the world through a process of people hearing God's word and responding in repentance and faith. As a Christian I have many responsibilities, but primarily they are to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love my neighbour

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2 Michael Evans, 'Stoic Philosophy and the Profession of Arms', *Quadrant*, January-February, 2010, pp. 46–49.

as myself,[3] and in accordance with the 'Great Commission', to spread the good news about Jesus Christ throughout all nations.[4]

IV The Enduring Value of the Christian Faith to the Profession of Arms

Despite a rising secularism and increasing anti-Christian agenda evident in public discourse, I believe that the Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms. I do not believe that a Christian faith and service in the armed forces are incompatible and there is a significant body of literature that presents this argument clearly and in a more fulsome manner than is possible here.[5] The Confederate General, Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson and a recent UK Chief of the General Staff, Sir Richard Dannett, are notable examples of military men who followed the Christian faith.[6]

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3 Matthew 22:37. All references from the Bible are from the New International Version (NIV).

4 Matthew 28:18-20. See the Apostles' Creed for an objective statement of the Christian belief.

5 For an explanation of the views that surround the question of whether a Christian should serve in the military, see Mark Warren and Michael Hanlon, *Living by the Sword: Can a Christian Serve in the Military?* (Fighting Words Ministries, 2000).

6 For an exposition of a Christian officer's service in war, including in command appointments, including the influence of faith on these roles, see Major Craig Bickell, 'A Christian in Command—The Example of General "Stonewall" Jackson', in *JOLT*, September 2006, pp. 7–12 <http:// www.focusmilitary.org.au> or General Sir Richard Dannett, *Leading From the Front* (London: Bantam, 2010).

1. Morale

The Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms because it remains a source of morale for individual soldiers, provides a positive example of leadership and sacrifice, is a source of resilience and heals mental wounds and moral injury. Christian faith informs character, provides a pathway to individual and thus cultural change, informs assessments of what constitutes a 'just war' and ultimately provides a means of overcoming the fear and reality of death that permeates the environment in which the profession of arms operates—the battlefield.

Jesus Christ provides a model of sacrifice to emulate. Faith in Christ commands the believer to emulate Christ in his or her words and actions. Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross on the orders of the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. The Bible teaches that the purpose of Christ's death on the cross was to atone for, or pay the penalty for, human sinfulness or rejection of God. So Jesus laid down his life for others and personally demonstrated what he taught his disciples—'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'[7]

Members of the profession of arms are asked and required to be prepared to give their lives in the service of their nation. While a just cause is an important factor in maintaining a soldier's will to fight, many soldiers derive greater motivation from the knowledge that they are fighting with and for their mates. This may be particularly so when the justness of their cause is in question or open to debate. In this

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7 John 15: 13.

way, for Christians serving in the military, Christ laying down his life in an act of service to others—even his enemies—is an example to emulate as they struggle to overcome the natural human desire for survival and fear of death on the battlefield.

2. Leadership

Jesus Christ provides a model of leadership to follow in two important aspects. First, Jesus was obedient to his Father, God, the ultimate authority, to the point of death. He trusted in God's plan for him. In time of war, soldiers will be asked to trust and obey their commanders to the point of death. Jesus is and can be a model of obedience from which to draw inspiration and will. The motto of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is 'Serve to Lead' and Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of the servant leader.

Jesus' sole mission and purpose was to serve humanity by becoming an atoning sacrifice for humanity's rejection of God so that people could know God and return to a restored relationship with him while avoiding eternal punishment. He served and sacrificed himself for those who did not want his service or sacrifice, and who were—who are—in effect, his enemies. Jesus demonstrated the servant nature of his leadership by the act of washing the feet of his disciples as recorded in the Gospel of John[8] and through the act of willingly going to his death on the Cross.[9] While I have seen success-

ful leaders sacrifice for and serve their subordinates without holding a Christian faith, it is my view that these leaders have been taught or have seen and adopted the benefits of such a servant leadership model, perhaps without its attribution to the example of Christ.

3. Resilience

Faith in Christ is a source of resilience. Resilience is both an individual's ability to cope with stress and adversity and a measure of the capacity to endure beyond all reasonable limits. This coping may result in the individual's being restored to a previous state of normal functioning, simply not displaying negative effects, or even growing from the experience. Contemporary specialists such as Glenn Schiraldi recognise the value of religion to resilience.[10]

The Christian faith holds that 'in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'[11] and that 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'[12] A Christian who believes in these words of Paul, that in everything that occurs in one's life God is working to bring about some good purpose and that nothing—even death—will sepa-

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8 John 13:1-17.

9 For a more fulsome discussion of this leadership model and its Christian origins see John Dickson, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life*, Love

and Leadership (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

10 See the chapter entitled 'Religion and Spirituality' in Glenn Schiraldi, *The Complete Guide to Resilience* (Ashburn, Va: Resilience Training International, 2011).

11 Romans 8:28.

12 Romans 8:38-39.

rate him/her from God's love, draws on an enormous resource derived from scripture which provides the means to cope with the stress and adversity that life and, more acutely, military operations present.

Even a cursory reading of the Psalms will demonstrate that such resilience is born of a faith that does not deny adversity or fear or claim to control fate.[13] The perspective of the Psalmist stands in contrast with the self-deceptive 'siren song' of the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley and admired by Michael Evans as the 'most eloquent tribute to the noble essence of the Stoic spirit'. In his poem, Henley proudly claims that, exposed to great adversity and stress (experienced during a lifetime of debilitating illness and infirmity), he has not winced or cried aloud, that he is unafraid and, most famously, that he 'is the master of his fate, the captain of my soul'. But Henley's very experience of life demonstrates that he was not master of his fate and the Bible teaches us that his soul's fate will be determined by God rather than Henley himself. If Henley is the 'Captain of his soul' then God is both its field marshal and Defence Force Magistrate.

Most soldiers would probably relate to the frightened and flawed character who is the principal protagonist in Stephen Crane's American Civil War classic *The Red Badge of Courage*, rather than the apparently unafraid Henley. A wiser soldier would do better to heed Jesus' words:

> Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.[14]

Linked to resilience is an individual warrior's ability to resist interrogation, and at least one post-Korean War study has identified the value of religious faith and national idealism in resisting indoctrination and interrogation. The *United Kingdom Advisory Panel Report on the Korean War*, in its chapter entitled 'Factors Affecting Individual Resistance in Battle or after Capture', made just such an observation and recommended that those who had this kind of faith and idealism should be encouraged and assisted to strengthen it.

This recommendation was influential in post-Korean War Australia and taken seriously by the Army's Directorate of Military Training. It laid the foundations for the emergence of the Character Guidance Course in the Australian Army in 1959, which sought to develop character through a promotion of the religious and moral tenets of the Christian faith.[15] Not only does faith in

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13 For example, see Psalm 121.

14 Matthew 7:24-27.

15 Chaplain E. Sabel, 'A History of Character Guidance in the Australian Army', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, No. 28, May/June 1981, 24, 27.

Christ assist in developing resilience, but there is evidence that it assists individuals to resist and survive interrogation and capture.

4. Fighting power

Faith in Christ is a valuable component of fighting power. The Australian Army's Land Warfare Doctrine 00-2—*Character* recognises that the root of character is a coherent belief and value system. The most influential belief and value system in post-colonial Australian history is the Christian faith, a coherent—albeit now not widely held—belief system. Doctrine therefore recognises Christianity's value as a foundational element of the moral component of fighting power that provides the will to fight.

5. Character

This doctrine makes the profound claim that the combat capability of an Army relies as much on the spiritual and moral qualities that are at the heart of a person's character as it does on physical fitness and skills—perhaps more so when soldiers are under stress.[16] According to Army's doctrine, belief in Christ within its members provides a foundation for the Australian Army's combat capability.

The military has long recognised the importance of character to soldiering. Lord Moran, the medical officer of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers from 1914–1917 and later Churchill's doctor during the Second World War, concluded that:

… fortitude in war has its roots in morality; that selection [recruitment] is a search for character, and that war itself is but one more test—the supreme and final test if you will—of character … a man of character in peace becomes a man of courage in war. He cannot be selfish in peace yet be unselfish in war. Character as Aristotle taught is a habit, the daily choice of right instead of wrong; it is a moral quality which grows to maturity in peace and is not suddenly developed on the outbreak of war. For war, in spite of much that we have heard to the contrary, has no power to transform, it merely exaggerates the good and evil that is in us, till it is plain for all to read; it cannot change, it exposes.

Man's fate in battle is worked out before war begins. For his acts in war are dictated not by courage, nor by fear, but by conscience, of which war is the final test. The man whose quick conscience is the secret of his success in battle has the same clear cut feelings about right and wrong before war makes them obvious to all. If you know a man in peace, you know him in war.[17]

Based on his military experience, particularly commanding the Fourteenth Army in Burma during the Second World War, Field Marshal Sir William Slim observed that 'religion has always been and still is one of the greatest foundations of morale, especially of military morale. Saints and soldiers have much in common … The Christian

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16 Land Warfare Doctrinal Publication 0-0-2, *Character*, Australian Army, 2005, 1-7.

17 Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (Garden City Park, NY: Avery, 1987), 159–60.

religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale.'[18]

6. Healing

Faith in Christ also heals mental and spiritual wounds. There is increasing awareness of mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in veterans of operational service. This phenomenon is not new, but recent conflicts and media attention have once again brought what is now commonly referred to as PTSD to the fore. Steven Pressfield, author of *Gates of Fire*, a fictional account of the epic Battle of Thermopylae when 300 Spartans courageously faced an overwhelming Persian army, spoke of 'the guilt of the warrior'. To paraphrase the narrator in that account:

> There is a secret all warriors share, so private that none dare give it voice, save only to those mates drawn dearer than brothers by the shared ordeal of arms. This is the knowledge of the hundred acts or omissions where he or she has fallen short. The little things that no one sees. The comrade who fell and cried for aid. Did I pass him by? Choose my skin over his? That was my crime, of which I accuse myself in the tribunal of my heart and there condemn myself as guilty.[19]

To use a contemporary example of a soldier burdened by the 'guilt of the warrior', former Major General John Cantwell, in his recent book, *Exit Wounds*, describes in vivid detail the burdens and guilt arising from his operational service and its consequences on his mental health and relationships.[20] Jesus Christ offers a solution to the guilt of Major General Cantwell, the guilt of this author and the guilt and anguish of all Australian servicemen and women who are bearing a burden caused by the physical, mental and spiritual[21] injuries sustained in their service, when he says:

> Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and you will find rest for your soul.[22]

It is a gift and offered freely. I would encourage those suffering such wounds, in addition to seeking help from professional mental health services, also to seriously investigate the Christian faith.[23]

7. Worldview

Faith in Christ also helps understand the world in which military opera-

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18 Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 183.

19 Steven Pressfield, *Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae* (London: Bantam, 1999).

20 See Major General John Cantwell and Greg Bearup, *Exit Wounds: One Australian's War on Terror* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012).

21 Spiritual injuries might be guilt, grief, moral injury, hopelessness, betrayal and anger.

22 Matthew 11:28-30.

23 To investigate Christianity read one of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, and view the DVD series, *Faith Under Fire*, available from all ADF chaplains.

tions are conducted. ADF (Australian Defence Force) operations take place in environments of natural disaster, human misery and suffering, war and injustice. These events and exposure to them often constitute the traumatic experience that lead to PTSD among members of the profession of arms. Christ teaches that these events, however traumatic, are inevitable and are signs of His return:

> You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.[24]

The Christian faith helps to explain the context in which military operations take place and provides an explanation of how the suffering and injustice witnessed during these operations by members of the profession of arms will ultimately be resolved. This knowledge contributes significantly to reducing the stress caused by exposure to such events.[25]

8. Behaviour

Faith in Christ commands behaviours valued by the profession of arms such as obedience to authority, respect and accountability. Christians are commanded to obey authority. Jesus Christ modelled obedience to authority in obeying his Father to the point of death on a cross. Paul writes to Roman Christians, 'let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.'[26] This theme continues in Peter: 'Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority …'[27] Paul commands Christians to 'show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.'[28]

9. Accountability

Finally, Paul teaches Christians accountability to God through the authorities established by Him:

> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit

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24 Matthew 24: 6-8.
25 For a more detailed explanation of how Christian faith informs a response to the suffering and injustice in the world, see C. Bickell, ''Walking the walk on Operations', *JOLT*, May 2007, pp. 10–13, at: <http://www.focus-military.org.au>

26 Romans 13:1.
27 2 Peter 2:13.
28 2 Peter 2:17.

to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.[29]

10. Change

Faith in Christ informs a pathway to change. Jesus and the first Christians called people to repent. Repentance is not just feeling sorrow or remorse, but a turning around, a complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction of one's life. Repentance will often lead to an attempt to right a wrong or to seek forgiveness or restore a broken relationship.

In 2012, in response to revelations of unacceptable behaviour and abuse within Defence [the Australian Defence Force] going back many years, Defence's senior leadership published *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*. This document is a statement of Defence's cultural intent and the organisation's strategy for realising that intent. It holds that Defence's work in implementing this strategy begins with accepting individual responsibility for one's own behaviour, assisting others to live the culture, and placing the onus on leaders to be exemplars of positive and visible change at all times. It also involves amending policies and processes that do not align with our cultural intent.[30] While not explicitly stated, the strategy aims to respond to and prevent the occurrence of the types of abuse and incidents of unacceptable behaviour that led to the requirement

for such a strategy to be developed.

The Christian faith offers a tried and true pathway to change: repentance and placing one's trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This faith has changed the lives of its adherents and the organisations with which they were affiliated since Jesus first called people to faith in Him. From Saul, the repentant chief persecutor of Christians who became Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles; to John Newton, the repentant slave trader and author of *Amazing Grace*; to Charles Colson, the repentant Chief of Staff to Richard Nixon during Watergate and author of *Born Again*, individuals have been called to faith, responded in repentance, righted wrongs and restored broken relationships and, in so doing, changed their lives and often the course of history.

Defence's strategy to evolve its culture could benefit from acts of repentance and the associated concept of forgiveness derived from the Christian faith. This will be difficult as Jesus Christ both warns and calls people when speaking of the pathway to heaven:

> Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the path that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the path that leads to life, and only a few find it.[31]

11. Standards and 'Just War'

Christianity also informs the standards of the profession of arms in terms of what comprises a 'just war'. The Christian faith and consequent ideas of two

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29 Romans 13:2-5.

30 Commonwealth of Australia, *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*, 2012, at: http://www.defence.gov.au/pathwaytochange/docs/

31 Matthew 7: 13-14.

leading theologians, Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, have informed the philosophy that underpins the Australian Army's approach to rationalising the use of force, the so-called 'just war' principles.[32]

The first and foremost criterion for a 'just war' is that it is only the state that can legitimately wage war. This criterion is derived from Christian theologians such as Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, and is associated with Romans 13 in which the authorities 'have been instituted by God. [They are] the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.'

Second, for a war to be 'just', force must be used only in a just cause. A just cause is one which, drawing on the notion of justice in the Christian tradition, is concerned with justice for all rather than limited to the more common cause of self-defence. In this it is more concerned with the 'defence of others, especially innocent third parties in the face of unjust aggression', than with self-defence.[33] A just cause could be associated with repelling an unjust attack, recovering that which has been unjustly seized, or restoring the moral order. A just cause provides legitimacy for pre-emptive strikes that respond to a threat that is both imminent and grave, but prohibits preventative attacks.

The third criterion is that there must be a 'just' intent in using force. Force should be used only to seek a just peace, informed by a love of one's enemy rather than hatred or revenge, and a desire to see justice for all, not solely oneself.[34] War must be a last resort in that diplomacy must, in good faith, be given time to succeed and alternatives to war must be investigated. These concepts are rooted in the Christian concept of divine hope—a proven hope that God is able to soften hard hearts.

Finally, there must be a reasonable prospect of success. It should be conducted for attainable, limited ends and the costs and benefits must be proportionate. The criteria informed by a Christian faith would both prohibit demands for unconditional surrender from a state and require that the state entertain the option of negotiating a halt or surrendering if the other criteria of just war become unattainable.

These concepts reflect the Christian belief that 'it is not the force of a nation's arms that guarantees that justice will prevail, but the Lord, who is able to defeat even death'. A Christian knows that 'nation states and armies are not the final line of defence against injustice'. Christians can 'surrender, because they know that surrender and defeat does not and cannot mean the end for either Christians or their neighbours'.[35]

12. Courage

Finally, the Christian faith is a source of courage that provides a means of overcoming the fear and reality of death that permeates the battlefields in which members of the profession of arms operate, risking their lives.

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32 LWD 0-0-2 *Character*, 1-4, 1A1-2.

33 Daniel Bell, *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church rather than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 134.

34 Bell, *Just War*, 153–67.

35 Bell, *Just War,* 201.

Christians believe that, whether they live or die, they belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.[36] Christians strive to follow Paul, who claimed that for him, 'to live is Christ, and to die is to gain'.[37] Christians believe that death is not the end, but that, through their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they will be raised from death and live in eternity in the new heaven and new earth promised in the Book of Revelation. Michael Evans cites the former United States Navy SEAL commando, Richard Marcinko:

> It is my unshakeable belief that when … two intrinsic values— the total acceptance of death as a natural condition of life, and total acceptance of an absolute moral code—are combined, the Warrior becomes invincible.[38]

Christians accept death as a natural condition of life and view it as simply a temporary journey on their way to their ultimate destination—eternal life with Christ. In my view it is this belief that led Field Marshal Slim to conclude that 'the Christian religion is above all others a source of that enduring courage which is the most valuable of all the components of morale'.[39]

V Conclusion

The 'inner armour' of members of the profession of arms in western militaries is being challenged by an increasingly secularised culture. Stoicism is a limited and incomplete solution because of its inherent self-focus and failure to deal with every soldier's question, 'What happens when I am killed in battle?'

The aim of this article has been to demonstrate the enduring value of the Christian faith to the profession of arms. The Christian faith endures as a source of courage and morale, an integral component of fighting power and thus combat capability, a model of leadership to follow. It teaches values and behaviours idealised by the profession of arms, offers a tried and tested pathway to change, and informs the Army's concept of what constitutes a 'just war'.

Members of the profession of arms would benefit from an investigation and serious consideration of the Christian faith. The Army would be well served by encouraging its members who follow the Christian faith to meet, pray, learn from the Bible and encourage one another. The Army should also continue to allow its members to freely hear about, discuss and investigate the gospel, the basis of the Christian faith. Spiritual resilience programs should be informed (but not exclusively) by the Christian faith. Finally, character training programs should be encouraged and continue to embrace the Christian faith as a belief system central to the development of character.

As this article has argued, far from being detrimental, doing so will positively contribute to the Army's fighting power and combat capability.

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36 Romans 14:8.

37 Philippians 1:21.

38 Cited in Evans, 'Stoic Philosophy and the Profession of Arms', 49.

39 Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 183.

A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: Themes and Issues in Evangelical Approaches

David Thang Moe

I Introduction

A theology of religions emerged as an academic discipline in the late twentieth century.[1] Since then, interest in a theology of religions has grown among the leading pluralistic Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. Catholic theologian, Alan Race's three typologies coined in 1983[2]—'inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism'—became popular among religious theologians to describe the Christian perspectives on and attitudes toward other religions. These three typologies have been adopted more widely by pluralistic theologians in their subsequent writings.[3]

In reaction to the pluralistic theologians' neglect of the uniqueness of Christ and other theological and missiological issues, some evangelical theologians joined the discussion on a theology of religions in the 1990s.[4] In light of Race's use of three categories, 'evangelicals are regarded both by themselves and by others as *exclusivists*' because of their narrow focus on Christ and their focus on evangelism.[5] Evangelical theologian, Terry Muck, complains that Race's use of three categories is helpful in sorting out different views on other religions, but

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1 Gerald McDermott and Harold A. Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9.

2 Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

3 One good example is, Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

4 For examples, see Terry C. Muck, 'Evangelicals and Interreligious Dialogue', in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 36. 4 (1993): 517-529. Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 309.

5 Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 75-96. See also McDermott, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 12.

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the taxonomy is misleading without a proper description of the meaning of theology of religions.[6]

In light of these three categories, theologians continue to debate the proper subject matter and methodology of theology of religions. Their question is: what do we mean by a theology of religions?[7] In answering that question, Pentecostal-evangelical theologian, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, helpfully defines the theology of religions as 'the academic discipline, which attempts to think theologically about the meaning of religions and about what it means for Christians to live with other world religions'.[8]

Although Karkkainen's definition is helpful in figuring out what it means to explore a theology of religions, what is missing in his book is a trinitarian theology of religion. However, in a later book published in 2004, he does re-consider the role of the Trinity in a theology of religions.[9] Pentecostal-evangelical theologian Amos Yong is right in saying, 'Explicit work on a Trinitarian theology of religions by evangelicals has emerged only recently.'[10]

One of the most substantive and recent works on a trinitarian theology of religions is a collaborative effort by two prominent evangelical theologians, Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland.[11] They observe that evangelicals did not take the Trinity seriously from the beginning 'in part because of their investment in Enlightenment presuppositions'.[12] 'With the Enlightenment presuppositions, they placed the evangelistic work of conversion over the Trinity.'[13]

Evangelicals are accused of being excessively Christocentric in favour of a narrow focus on salvation within the church, departing from a robust trinitarian theology of religions.[14] It is a central contention in this paper that a Christian theology of religions must be trinitarian by nature and that our approach to the trinitarian theology of religions must be evangelical in perspective.

In my approach, a trinitarian theology of religions provides two central methodological themes: the different characters of the triune God within the one Godhead, and their external relation to the world through Christ by the Spirit. If the former recognizes the diversities of world religions, the latter provides Christians with the trinitarian mission model of the relation to the di-

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6 Terry C. Muck, 'Instrumentality, Complexity and Reason: A Christian Approach to Religious Diversity', in *Christian-Buddhist Studies*, 22 (2002): 115-121.

7 Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 311.

8 Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 20.

9 Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions (*Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

10 Amos Yong, 'Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Pentecostal-Evangelical Missiological Elaboration', in *International*

Bulletin of Mission Research, vol. 40.4 (October 2016): 294-306.

11 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions,* 46-85.

12 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 45.

13 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions,* 45.

14 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 8-9.

verse world religions of the Spirit.

But how should Christians embody the relational aspect of the Trinity? What is the goal of the external relation of the Trinity to the world and what is the goal of Christians' communication with other religions?

To answer these questions, I would first like to depict an evangelical trinitarian theology of religions as comprising three components: confession of faith, communication of faith and cultivation of faith.

First, confession of faith involves a theological reflection on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—as the Father, Son and the Spirit who created and redeemed the world. Second, communication of faith involves the missiological question of how we should imitate the triune God's communication with the world by communicating the Christian faith with other faiths in a pluralistic world. Third, cultivation of faith seeks the ethical question of how God's holiness as sanctification should be practised by learning insights from other religions.[15]

Putting three components together, I would like to define a trinitarian theology of religions as an academic discipline which asks the theological and missiological question of what it means to be religious and of how Christians should witness to Christ among other world religions by recognizing the cosmic act of Christ and by discerning the cosmic presence of the Spirit in a religious world.

The purpose of this paper is to explore emerging themes and issues in the evangelical approaches to a trinitarian theology of religions from a missiological perspective. The result will go beyond Race's classic threefold typology of 'exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism'.

The paper has three parts. In part one, I will explore the doctrine of the Trinity and the nature and models of God's special revelation through Christ and general revelation in other religions. In part two, I will examine the concept of salvation and conversion and their missiological implications in a pluralistic world. In part three, I will explore the role of religious cultures in developing Christianity, cultivating faith, ethical discipleship and translating the gospel for a public truth.

II Trinity, Revelation and Religions: The Confession of Faith

The purpose of this section is to provide the framework for a trinitarian theology of religions. I will begin by evaluating the pluralists' approach to the doctrine of God.

1. Pluralist theology

Pluralists, such as John Hick and Paul Knitter approach a pluralistic theology of religions through the lens of broad theocentrism. Hick famously develops theocentrism on an analogy with the Copernican revolution. Just as Copernicus recognized the sun at the centre of the earth, so God must be put at the centre of the world religions.

When Hick speaks of God, he refers

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15 I borrowed some ideas from Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 312.

to the 'ultimate reality'.[16] Since God is the ultimate reality, other religions revolve around and experience God through their common practices. With his emphasis on theocentrism, Hick denies Christocentricism. He regards the incarnation of Christ as a mythology and Christ not as a unique divine being.[17]

Following in the traditions of Hick, Paul Knitter proposes a theocentric Christology as a foundation for developing the pluralistic position. He claims that 'Jesus Himself was theocentric and His mission was kingdom-centered or God-centered'.[18] As Knitter claims, Jesus did not think of himself as divine, and thus he may be unique morally, but his moral uniqueness is related only to other religious founders. Hick and Knitter come to the conclusion that the uniqueness of Christ for Christians is only relative to other religious figures, such as Mohammad, Krishna, Buddha and Confucius.[19]

2. Limitations

In my view, Hick and Knitter have some theological limitations. One is the failure to accept the incarnation of Christ

as the fulfilment of the trinitarian process in creation. They separate the incarnate Christ from the pre-incarnate Word of God. I argue that John starts with the affirmation that God through the Word created everything (Jn 1:3). The incarnate Jesus is not only the redeemer, but also the pre-incarnate creator of the world.[20]

Another is to prioritize the humanity of Christ over the divinity of Christ and to equate him with other religious founders so that all religions are the subjective response of humans to the one ultimate reality. I call this 'relativism, rather than revelation'. Finally, they prioritize the subjective experience of God of humans over God's objective revelation.

3. Positive approach

Contrary to them, first, I will take God's self-revelation in Christ as a central point of departure for a trinitarian theology of religions.[21] I will study two aspects of God's revelation: God's special revelation through the uncreated, yet incarnate Christ and God's general revelation through created nature. Though God is the subject of both kinds of revelation, I prioritize the former over the latter because it is through Christ that we come to know God (Jn 12:45).

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16 John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1995), 27.

17 John Hick, ed, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 178. 'Myth,' is defined by Hick as a story, which is told, but which is not literally true.

18 Knitter, *No Other Name?,* 173.

19 John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1995), 23-24. See also Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 77-78.

20 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 57-60.

21 In this respect, I follow Barth's methodology. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*: *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. I.1, translated by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 295. Barth takes God's revelation as a point of departure for all of his theological methodology.

a) Revelation defined

Let me begin by defining the meaning of revelation for a better understanding of this topic. Revelation comes from the Greek word, *apokalupto*, which means the unveiling of something that was hidden. Revelation is not something that we already know, but it has to do with our new knowledge and experience of what was previously unknown. This sense of revelation is noted by Paul in Ephesians: the mystery of Christ known to us by the Spirit (3:4).[22]

b) Christocentric approach

Second, I consider God's self-revelation in Christ to be central for a trinitarian theology of religions. By emphasizing God's sovereignty and human sin, Karl Barth made a qualitative distinction between God and humanity. Humans cannot know God apart from his self-revelation. Any human-saving knowledge of God must be initiated by the self-revealing God through the incarnate Christ by the Spirit. 'Apart from this act, the character and purpose of God remain a matter of sheer guessing.'[23]

According to Barth, revelation must come to us, rather than from us. To speak of God's special revelation, Barth sums this up: 'God revealed Himself through Himself.'[24] For Barth,

the incarnation of Christ is a trinitarian act of divine revelation. Barth regards 'the Father as the revealer (source of revelation), the Son as revelation (actor) and the Spirit as revealedness (empowerer).'[25] This one Lord is involved in Christ's incarnation.

c) Incarnation

Third, the incarnation of Christ is the embodiment and witness of God's special revelation (Jn 1:14). For Barth, the incarnation is a means through which God reconciles us to himself (Jn 12:32; 2 Cor 5:18). Likewise, Timothy Tennent argues for 'the incarnation as a means through which sinful humanity gains access to the triune God'.[26]

In order to make sense of a trinitarian incarnation among world religions, I find Andrew Walls' interpretation of the concept of incarnation helpful. According to Walls, incarnation distinguishes Christianity from the other two monotheistic religions—Judaism and Islam. 'At the heart of Jewish and Islamic faith is the Prophetic Word— God speaks to humanity. But at the heart of Christian faith is the Incarnate Word—God becomes humanity and dwells among us.'[27] Since God becomes human and makes himself known to us through Christ, we come to know and experience the triune God.

Incarnation is the fulfilment of the trinitarian process in creation. Colos-

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22 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 88. An excellent survey of fives modes of revelation, see, Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992).

23 Daniel L. Miglore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 28.

24 Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 1.1, 297.

25 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I.1, 295.

26 Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty—first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 190.

27 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis: 1996), 47.

sians pronounces that 'in Christ, the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form' (Col 2:9). Since the Father, Son and Spirit (trinitarian monotheism) are one in *essence* (Deut 6:4), so do they work mutually in one mission of creation (creation out of the old: Genesis 1) and of new creation or redemption (creation out of the old: 2 Cor 5:17).

This means that the two indivisible natures of Christ—full divinity (pre-incarnation) and full humanity are the key to our notion of Trinity. From creation through the incarnation and death to resurrection, the triune God is involved mutually. This is *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling in one another). John 16:15 echoes this coherence of the Three: 'All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that the Spirit will take what is mine, and will make it known to you.'[28]

d) Sinful humanity

Fourth, God's special revelation in Christ not only reveals his divine attributes of love and redeeming purpose but also exposes the sinful nature of humanity. Barth makes this explicit. He states, 'Just as a ray of sunshine reveals dirt in a dark room, so does sinless Jesus expose our sin in our heart.'[29] For Barth, God's revelation brings about the negation/judgment of sin and the exaltation/reconciliation of sinners. If the incarnation is God's descent, his act of reconciliation through Christ is humans' ascent. Jesus said,

'When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself' (Jn 12:32).

This sense of the Christian doctrine of trinitarian monotheism is in contrast to the Islamic doctrine of *tawhid* (absolute monotheism). 'Allah does not reveal Himself, He only reveals His will. Thus, the word, Islam means to submit to the will of Allah.'[30] Unlike an absolute Allah, a triune God chooses himself in the incarnate form of Christ not only to reveal his redeeming will, but also to reveal his trinitarian nature of personhood and relation.[31]

Recent scholarship has focused on the relational aspect of the Trinity by distinguishing between the immanent Trinity (inner relation among the Trinity) and the economic Trinity (God's external expression of love through Christ by the Spirit).[32]

e) Natural revelation

Fifth, within the economic framework of God's relation to the world, I think that the triune God's general revelation through created nature is possible. My intent is to show how God's general revelation is possible in and through other religious cultures.

In Myanmar, conservative evangelicals never pause to think about the possibility of God's general revelation in other religious cultures, namely Buddhism and spirit-worship. Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:19-20 provide the possibility of God's general revelation.

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28 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 53.

29 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, vol. IV.2, translated by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969), 403.

30 Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions,* 80.

31 Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 80.

32 Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 80. See also Karkkainen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 5-6.

However, I must distinguish between God's special revelation in and through Christ and God's general revelation in and through nature. Through the former, we have a saving knowledge of God. Through the latter, we have a natural knowledge of God.

John Calvin rightly argues that 'God the Creator can be known through his created order. But God the Redeemer is known only through the uncreated and incarnated Christ.'[33] Noted American evangelical theologian, Jonathan Edwards, agreed with Calvin and argues further that 'nature points to only God the Creator, not God the Redeemer, and that knowledge of the former is insufficient for salvation'.[34]

In line with Calvin and Edwards, it is fair to note that other religions may have no saving knowledge of God's special revelation as attested in the Bible, but they certainly have natural knowledge of God because God continues to reveal himself to them through their cultures. God's incarnational revelation is not only an event, but also a dynamic process. The role of the Spirit is crucial to God's dynamic process of general revelation.

f) Pneumatocentric approach

Sixth, building his pneumatological insights on Acts 2:17 (the Spirit-poured-out-on all flesh) as the model for a pneumatological theology of religions, Yong explores possible ways to *discern*

the 'cosmic presence and activity of the Spirit in other religions'.[35] In reference to Irenaeus' metaphor of the Son and the Spirit as two hands of the Father,[36] Yong emphasizes the interrelation between the Word (Jn 1:14) and the Spirit (Acts 2:17) in God's economic act and presence of general revelation in other religions.[37]

I argue that a new understanding and acknowledgement of the interrelation between the incarnate work of Christ and the universal presence and activity of the Spirit in the whole world, including other religious cultures, could overcome a misunderstanding of Race's classic threefold typology of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

Yong is right to insist on the interrelation between the Son and the Spirit, because not only does the Son send the Spirit, but also the Spirit enables us to understand Christ. To hold their mutual bond in one essence, Yong said, 'The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.'[38] However, I hesitate to accept his position of pneumatology as a starting point for a trinitarian theology of religions.[39]

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33 Noted in McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 91. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeil (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 1.5.

34 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 92.

35 Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit (s)* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000).

36 Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 43.

37 Amos Yong, 'Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Pentecostal-Evangelical and Missiological Elaboration', in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Vol. 40. 4 (October 2016): 294-306 (here pp. 297-300).

38 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse,* 187.

39 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 103.

4. Methodological Questions: Two Starting Points

Finally, there is some debate among theologians of religions today over the methodological questions of whether we should begin with Christology or with Pneumatology for a trinitarian theology of religions. We have to use a Trinitarian Christology as a starting point for a Trinitarian theology of religions because we know who God is and what his saving purpose is through Christ. This does not mean that we should exclude Pneumatology. If we hold the interrelation between the Word and the Spirit in a pluralistic world, there is no room for excluding Pneumatology. However, it is true that in the past, Christian theologians paid little attention to Pneumatology for some reason.

I argue that a trinitarian theology of religions must stress the need of interrelation between the Son and the Spirit. If Jesus tells us who God is in terms of his full divinity and full humanity, the Spirit tells us where God is in terms of his universal presence both in church and in society. Thus, we will certainly use pneumatology as a media of God's general revelation of universal work and mysterious presence in other religions.

Some conservative evangelicals in Myanmar mistakenly believe that the Spirit is at work only where people already acknowledge the lordship of Christ within the church. I must argue against this claim and contend that the cosmic Spirit is at work for God's general revelation everywhere even before other faiths acknowledge Christ.[40]

This is God's prevenient grace. To acknowledge God's general revelation of prevenient grace, I would further argue that other religious cultures pave the way for the saving gospel.

To relate this to my own Chin ethnic context, I am proud to show how the Chin practice of spirit-worship and sacrificial rites paved the way for the gospel of Jesus' atonement. When missionaries preached the gospel of Christ, their hearers readily accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour who died for them. Today, the Chins represent the country's highest percentage of Christian population. Hence, Jesus' sacrificial atonement by blood is scandalous to the Burmese Buddhist doctrine of *ahimsa* (non-violence).[41]

In sum, God is a revelatory God and Jesus is the witness of the Trinity. I will now discuss the Trinitarian act of salvation and the role of the church as a trinitarian witness among other religions.

III Salvation, Conversion and Social Justice: The Communication of Faith

My aim is to combine a doctrine of the economic Trinity and a doctrine of salvation. Mark Heim helpfully does this by defining 'salvation as a relation of communion with God and other creatures or religious outsiders'.[42] I take up

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40 Yong, *Discerning the Spirit (s)*, 70.

41 For a fuller account, see my article, David Thang Moe, 'Nat-Worship and Paul Tillich: Contextualizing A Correlational Theology of Religions and Cultures in Myanmar,' in *Toronto Journal of Theology,* vol. 31.1 (Spring 2015): 123-136.

42 S. Mark Heim, *The Depths of the Riches*: *A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 49.

the relational aspect of the economic Trinity and salvation as communion with God and with other creatures as a point of departure for communicating the Christian faith to other religious outsiders.

Just as the triune God is in relation to us by self-giving love through Christ, Christians ought to be in relation to each other in the church and also to be in relation to religious outsiders in society by love. However, I do not follow Heim's pluralistic concept of multiple salvations by multiple saviours because 'he makes religious pluralism more pluralistic'.[43]

In my opinion, Heim views a trinitarian theology of religions through the lens of postmodernism. Postmodernism teaches us that there is no absolute truth but there are only multiple truths, and that Jesus is one of many truths. In other words, Jesus is not the only Saviour. Salvation can be found outside Christ.

Heim puts a Christian concept of salvation alongside the Islamic concept of salvation as submission, the Buddhist concept of enlightenment, and the Hindu concept of moksa. He believes there are multiple salvations. Thus, he uses the word 'salvations' in the plural, rather than the word 'salvation' in the singular. He comes to the conclusion that all religions arrive at multiple and different goals by multiple ways of salvation.[44] Interestingly enough, Heim replaces Hick and Knitter's pluralistic stance of *one* common goal by different

paths[45] with the postmodern stance of multiple goals by multiple paths.

The three of them, along with other pluralists, reject the idea that salvation is found only in Christ and propose the acceptance model as the ground for true interreligious dialogue. For them, the goal of interreligious dialogue is to respect and accept other religions regardless of differences and to see the differences not necessarily as the sources of conflicts, but as the sources of complementarinesses by compromise.[46]

1. The uniqueness of Christ

In their communication with other religions, evangelicals, unlike pluralists, have always been earnest about trusting in the salvation that Christ brings. Evangelicals have taken the preaching of the gospel of salvation as their first priority. Because of this, evangelicals could be understood as the 'gospel-people'.

An evangelical trinitarian theology of religions must affirm the uniqueness of Christ. Jesus is the only and one Saviour for all (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12). Jesus is not just one of many lights, but he is the only salvific light of the world (Jn 8:12). Jesus is not just one of multiple truths, but he is the only truth by which other religious truths must be judged and transformed by the power of the Spirit.

Historically, the Lausanne Covenant took the first two texts as the foundations for affirming 'Jesus as the only Saviour and the one mediator between

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43 Karkkainen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 134.
44 Heim, *The Depths of the Riches*, 175.

45 Knitter, *Jesus and The Other Names*, 61-83.
46 Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 109-191.

God and humans, and there is no other name'.[47] The Mission and Evangelism Conference of the WCC held at San Antonio in 1989 also made a statement about the uniqueness of Christ: 'We cannot point to any other way than Jesus Christ, at the same time, we cannot set limits to the saving power of God.'[48] Christopher Wright summarizes well;

> Salvation belongs to God alone; is initiated by His grace, achieved by His power, offered on His terms; secured by His promises; guaranteed by His sovereignty. God is the sole subject of saving us from the power of sin. Salvation is the result of no action of ours other than that of asking and accepting it from God.[49]

2. Multidimensional aspect of salvation

Wright's statement raises the question of what we mean by salvation in the Bible and in a pluralistic world, and why Christ is unique. We have to acknowledge that salvation is multidimensional. The different dimensions are characterized by such concepts as justification (declarative act of relation with God), redemption (redeeming us from the power of sin and death),

and new birth, forgiveness of sin, deliverance from exile, liberation from the power of injustice and healing the groaning world and so on.[50]

Another way to put this is that God's salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ by the power of the Spirit is the fulfilment of what God had promised in the Old Testament (Isa 53 and Ps 22) and the culmination of new heavens and a new earth (Rom 8:19-22; Rev 21:1-4).[51] Evangelical scholar, F.F. Bruce, argued that Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross is the result of Israel's disobedience to God and such disobedience itself is sin.[52]

Radical liberal theologians criticize the death of Christ rather than glorifying it as being central to the Christian faith.[53] Their criticism is based on equating the innocent suffering of people with the innocent suffering of Christ. I argue that the suffering of people should not/cannot be seen as equal to the representative suffering of Christ. Human suffering is not an offer-

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47 John Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publication, 1975), 14.

48 Fredrick R. Wilson, ed, *The San Antonio Report—Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

49 Christopher J.H. Wright, 'Salvation Belongs to Our God,' in *Evangelical Interfaith Dialogue*, vol. 1.4. (2010): 3. See also Christopher J.H Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 265-288.

50 Wright, 'Salvation Belongs to God', 265-288. For a broad discussion of salvation, see also Joel B. Green, *Why Salvation? Reframing New Testament Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2014).

51 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 153.

52 E.K. Simpson, F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 215-216. To say that Israel's disobedience is sin, see also Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in Prophets: Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (Chicago, IL: Scholars, 1982), 22.

53 Among many books, see Marit Trealstad, ed, *Cross Examinations: Reading on the Meaning of the Cross Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2006).

ing to God and it is not required of us
to suffer either.

The contrast between the suffering
of people and the suffering of Jesus
is that the latter is God's purpose for
salvation, while the former is not. This
does not mean that the suffering of
people is of no importance to God. To
this I will return. What I would like to
stress here is the interrelation between
the substitutionary character of Jesus'
atonement and the consequence of the
Christus Victor theme for an evangelical
trinitarian theology of religions.

Evangelicals emphasize that it is
through the substitutionary death of
Christ that God forgives, declares us
righteous, and reconciles us with him-
self (Rom 5:8-10; 2 Cor 5:18; Heb 9:15-
22) and it is through the resurrection
that salvation results in the defeat of
evil and death and culminates in new
life.[54] Apocalyptically, the resurrection
of Christ is the beginning of new life
and hope in God (Rom 15:13).

Jürgen Moltmann takes up the resur-
rection of Christ as a point of departure
for his entire theology.[55] Moltmann's
theology of hope must be endorsed by
evangelicals for a larger discussion
on the death of Christ and his saving
power in a post-resurrection mission.
More interestingly, Moltmann's theol-
ogy of social Trinity[56] could enrich an

evangelical commitment to the socio-
political and religious engagement
with other faiths in a post-resurrection
age.

3. Mission

In the intermediate age between the
resurrection and the *parousia* of Christ,
the mission task of the church is to wit-
ness to what the triune God has done
through the death and resurrection of
Christ by the power of the Spirit. If the
death and resurrection of Christ is the
saving theme, the whole world is the
scope of the mission of church. By re-
ferring to the mission of church, I do
not mean to separate it from the mis-
sion of God (*missio Dei*). Rather they
are interrelated. Just as Christ is the
visible witness of the triune God, the
mission of church is the witness of the
mission of the triune God.[57]

The interrelation of the apostolic
mission of the church and the incarna-
tional and universal mission of the tri-
une God is grounded in two Bible texts:
John 20:21-22 and Acts 1:8. These two
texts raise the mission question of
what we mean by the Christian apos-
tolic witnesses among other religions
in a pluralistic world.

4. Witness—verbal word and visible work

In order to achieve my goal, I argue
that the word 'witness' needs to be

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54 Mark Noll, 'What is Evangelical?' In *Ox-
ford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Ger-
ald R. McDermott (New York: Oxford Univer-
sity Press, 2010): 19-32. For the central of the
resurrection of Christ, see also N.T. Wright,
Evil and the Justice of God (Downers Grove, IL:
IVP, 2013), 135-145.

55 Jürgen Moltmann, *A Theology of Hope*
(London: SCM, 1967).

56 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the King-*

dom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl
(London: SCM Press, 1981), 150. Moltmann
uses 'social Trinity' in lieu of 'economic Trin-
ity.'

57 Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions,* 487-
490.

understood in terms of both verbal proclaiming of the saving gospel of Christ and of the visible embodiment of the kingdom of God. I call the former 'verbal witness' and the latter 'visible witness'. In other words, we must put faith alongside practice.

James reminds us that 'faith without works is dead' (Jas 2:26b). Likewise, Lessie Newbigin was right when he said; 'the mission of Jesus was not only to proclaim the kingdom of God (word), but also to embody the presence of God's kingdom in His own person' (work).[58]

Central to the mission concept of proclaiming the gospel in word and embodying it in work is the idea that we preach and actualize salvation as good news among other religions. In his book, *Simply Good News*, Tom Wright explores the idea of why the gospel is news and what makes it good. For him, to claim the gospel as 'good news' is not simply about going to heaven, but about God's rescuing and redeeming us from the power of sin and death through Christ by the power of the Spirit.[59]

In line with Wright, I would further argue that proclaiming the gospel of salvation as good news for all people must be demonstrated in loving those of other faiths. Sadly in Myanmar, conservative evangelicals proclaim good news as bad news among Buddhists by condemning them as hell-goers without explaining what Christ's salvation

means for them. In our communication with other religions, I must stress that we ought to be humble rather than to condemn them.

The Cape Town Commitment reminds us of God's love for a sinful world (Jn 3:16) and our love for the pluralistic world should be maintained in our communication with religious outsiders.[60] Paul is a good example for us. In his communication with the pagans, he did not condemn them, although he was distressed to find them idolatrous (Acts 17:16). What is most important about Paul's inter-religious mission among the Athenians is that he did not bring God to them, but he revealed the 'unknown God' through their culture (17:23) and brought the gospel of resurrection to them (17:30-34).[61]

Paul used what Dean Flemming called 'the constructive and corrective communications with the pagans'.[62] Paul's communication of faith was constructive in the sense of appreciat-

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58 Lessie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 40.

59 Tom Wright, *Simply Good News: Why the Gospel is News and What Makes It Good* (London: SPCK, 2015).

60 The Cape Town Commitment: *A Confession of Faith and A Call to Action* (Peabody: MA: Hendricks Publishers and the Lausanne Covenant Movement, 2011), II.A.2, 34. See also Robert Schrieter, 'From Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment: A Theological Assessment', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 35. 2. (April 2011): 88-92; (here p. 90).

61 Along the same line with an African theologian, John Mbiti, who said that 'missionaries do not bring God to Africa or the foreign cultures', I explored this in my forthcoming article, David Thang Moe, 'Adoniram Judson: A Dialectical Missionary Who Brought the Gospel (Not God) and Gave the Bible to the Burmese,' in *Missiology: An International Review*, (2017).

62 Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 77.

ing their religious worldviews (17:22) and corrective in the sense of exposing their sinful idolatry and of calling them to Christ with repentance (17:31-34).

Both exclusivists and inclusivists accept the uniqueness of Christ and the centrality of his death and resurrection for all (1 Pet 3:8), but the latter do not emphasise the need to call followers of other religions to Christ with repentance because they regard them as what Karl Rahner called 'anonymous Christians'.[63] I appreciate the inclusive Christians for their positive attitudes toward Buddhism by adopting Paul's dialogical mission, but they fail to read Acts 17:30-34.

While I appreciate the inclusivists' positive approach to other faiths, I respectfully disagree with the leading proponent of inclusivism, Rahner's concept of other faiths as 'anonymous Christians'. It would be offensive to those of other faiths to be called 'anonymous Christians' without their self-acknowledgment. Can Christians be called 'anonymous Buddhists' without their self-acknowledgment?

5. Salvation and conversion

If we apply Paul's constructive and corrective communication of the apostolic faith to pagans in our pluralistic world (Acts 17:30-34), we cannot deny the fact that there is the need of interrelating salvation and conversion through personal and psychological repentance. Evangelical trinitarian theology of religions has to deal with this issue adequately. As I mentioned above, most inclusivists affirm that 'religious outsiders would be saved apart from hearing and responding explicitly to the gospel of salvation'.[64]

However, Paul said that 'saving faith comes only by hearing the word of God through the word of apostles' (Rom 10:17).[65] By relating Paul's word to John's word (salvation is a gift for all, and those who believe in Christ have eternal life, and whoever disobeys Christ will not see life and will endure God's wrath: Jn 3:37), it is fair to affirm that human response is necessary for God's salvation. To put it at its simplest, salvation is to be understood as God's free gift to all humans, and as a result of human response.

During his public ministry, Jesus called people to repent and believe in the gospel (Mk 1:15; Lk 4:17). Peter also urged the people to repent and to be baptized in the name of Jesus in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:28; 3:29). Repentance involves the idea of converting from one's former way of sinful and idolatrous life (Acts 17:31-34), from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God and following Christ (Acts 26:18).[66]

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63 Karl Rahner, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,' in *Theological Investigations*, vols. 5, trans. Karl H. Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1966), 115-134. Karl Rahner, 'Anonymous Christians,' in *Theological Investigation*, vols. 6, trans. Karl Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1969) 390-398.

64 John Sanders, 'Inclusivism' in *What About Those who Have Never Heard?* ed. John Sanders (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 55.

65 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 146.

66 Richard P. Peace, 'Conversion', in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, eds. William Dyrness and Veli-Mati Karkkainen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 196-197.

In reality, the mission practice of conversion is controversial. In my experience in Myanmar, conservative evangelicals convert Buddhists to Christianity by force. In my view, this is not true conversion. This is proselytization. Conversion comes from the inner power of repentance, while proselytization comes from external force.[67]

I would like to distinguish between conversion to Christ and conversion to Christianity. The former, the goal of communication of faith, is to simply introduce other faiths to Christ, while changing one's culture is the main goal of the latter. Evangelical trinitarian theology of religions must prioritize conversion to Christ over conversion to Christianity. This is because culture change would occur as a result of encounter with Christ from within their worldview rather than being forced from the outside.[68]

6. Social justice

Finally, converting other religions to Christ is not the only task of an evangelical trinitarian theology of religions. What evangelicals ought to do is to name social injustice as the result of sin.[69] The point here is not to separate Jesus' death and resurrection from his social ministry, but to integrate them for a holistic salvation.

In Myanmar, the weakness of conservative evangelicals is to emphasize Jesus' death without social engagement, while the weakness of liberal Christians is to emphasize Jesus' social ministry without proclaiming his death and resurrection. The result is that salvation becomes a kind of 'partial liberation'. Salvation must be holistic in scope: saving the lost souls and healing the broken bodies of the oppressed and reconciling the oppressors and the oppressed.

Reconciling the oppressed and oppressors is what I call 'inclusive liberation'. Some liberationists think that the goal of God's solidarity with the oppressed is exclusive of the oppressors. But I argue that if God is God of all humans—both the oppressed and oppressors (Mt 5:45)—the goal of his solidarity with the oppressed must be inclusive of the oppressors, as well. God's compassionate act of solidarity with the oppressed and his prophetic act of resistance to the oppressors lead to their mutual liberation.

The oppressed are to be liberated from the oppressors, and the oppressors are also to be liberated from their sin of dehumanization. The ultimate goal is to build a beloved and free community in which the oppressed will live side by side with their oppressors rather than to nurture the exclusive vision of winners and losers that promotes hatred.[70]

Another weakness of evangelicals is to divorce evangelism from social justice. If God's salvation is holistic, I argue that the question is not whether

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67 The difference between conversion and proselytization see Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 51-53.

68 Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became A World Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 90.

69 Noll, 'What is Evangelical?' 21-22.

70 David Thang Moe, 'Postcolonial and Liberation Theology as Partners Against Sin and Suffering: Hermeneutical Approaches in Asian Perspectives,' *EXCHANGE,* 45.4. (2016): 321-343.

we should egage in either evangelism or social justice. Moreover, the question is not whether we should prioritize evangelism over social justice. Since Christ is concerned about the equal importance of spiritual liberation and physical liberation, we, as the followers of Christ, ought to embody Christ's ministry.

Thus, the question is no longer *either* evangelism *or* social justice, but the question is how to take *both* evangelism *and* social justice as the concerns of an evangelical trinitarian theology of religions. An evangelical trinitarian theology of religions must be concerned about the commitment to bring together faith and action in witnessing to holistic salvation in the context of multi-religions and socio-injustice.

IV Gospel, Religious Culture, Ethical Discipleship: The Cultivation of Faith

Can/should Christians and those of other faiths, Buddhism in particular, learn from each other in the context of a trinitarian theology of religions? My answer is yes! So how and for what? I would argue that we ought to witness to the uniqueness of Christ and the universal act of the Spirit by listening to each other with respect to achieve five goals.

1. The image of God

In reaching out to those of other faiths, we must learn to see them first as fellow human beings who are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and secondarily as Buddhists, Hindus and Confucians and so on. We must meet them at the deepest level of their common

humanity. This demands that Christians must learn to love people of other faiths as their fellow humans, not to condemn them.

By prioritizing humanity over religiosity, Kosuke Koyama helpfully proposes interpersonal dialogue rather than interreligious dialogue as a model for a healthy cross-cultural mission. He said, 'The focus is to be on human Buddhists (people), rather than on religious Buddhism (doctrine).'[71] Though people cannot be separated from their religions in Asia, I find Koyama's model helpful for initiating a healthy conversation between Christians and Buddhists as neighbours.

2. Preparing for the gospel

Since those of other faiths are made in the image of God, their culture paves the way for the gospel. The *praeparatio evangelica* requires the evangelical behaviour of cultural appreciation and relating the gospel to Buddhists through their doctrine of *dharma*. Buddhists have a natural knowledge of God through their *dharma*. Similarly, Paul said that 'Gentiles have natural conscience of God through the moral law written in their hearts' (Rom 2:15).[72]

Sadly, conservative evangelicals in Myanmar use the colonial mission doctrine of *tabula rasa*, which forces culture to be destroyed in order to introduce the new gospel. Let us remember what Jesus said: 'I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil prophet and law'

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71 Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 25th anniversary (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 134.

72 Quoted in McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 92.

(Mt 5: 17). Jewish culture paved the way for the incarnation of Christ.

Concentrated on the incarnate Word who is sown in Jewish culture for all humanity ('*logos spermatikos*'),[73] our task is to link the gospel to the Buddhist cultures rather than to destroy them totally. But there is a necessity of 'partial replacement of the gospel'[74] with the Buddhist cultures. This will only come as a result of accepting the gospel, which will transform their cultures.[75]

3. Cultural appropriation

An evangelical trinitarian theology must address the need for cultural appropriation. Is this not contradictory to my earlier expression of cultural appreciation? The answer is yes and no. It contradicts partially but it does not contradict totally from the perspective of total replacement by Christian culture of other religious cultures. The two forces of cultural appreciation and appropriation are in dialectical tension. In this, the gospel is to be what Walls called the dialectics of 'prisoner and liberator of culture'.[76]

In line with Walls, I do think that in our respectful dialogue with Buddhism or other faiths, our first task is not to show the liberating power of the gospel over its culture, but to find the possible ways for the gospel to be inserted into that culture. The liberating power of the gospel in cultural appropriation comes as a result of Buddhist encounter with the gospel. The gospel is not to be transformed, but it has to transform culture.

This raises the question: why should we appropriate religious culture? The answer depends on our view of sin and culture. Buddhist cultures, distorted by sin, have the mixture of both good and bad or idolatrous elements.[77] The Apologist, Justin Martyr, said that 'the Word of Christ spoke to non-Christians, explaining what truth there is in their religious cultures, as well as where there is error in their beliefs and practices.[78]

If Justin Martyr is right, I suggest that an evangelical trinitarian theology of religions should re-consider idolatry as sin, as Paul aimed to do among pagans (Acts 17:16) and introduce a partial replacement model rather than a total replacement model[79] for Christian witness among Buddhists.

I suggest the partial replacement rather than total replacement because of the dialectics of both continuity and discontinuity in their experience of the mystery of the Trinity. Buddhists must discontinue the worship of the idolatrous image of the Buddha, but they may certainly continue using some of their ethical teachings, such as the eightfold path of threefold principle—

73 Noted in Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 62-63. *Logos Spermatikos* is the termed coined by Church Father Justin Martyr.

74 Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 19-22.

75 For a similar concept, see Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 190-229. Niebuhr argued that Christ must transform culture.

76 Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 3.

77 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions,* 206.

78 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 118.

79 Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 19-49.

morality, mediation and wisdom—for translating the gospel. This must necessarily lead me to re-appropriate Hendrick Kraemer's premature proposal of the 'radical discontinuity between the Christian faiths and other faiths'.[80]

Theologians, especially Barthians argue against Kraemer's misinterpretation of Barth's dialectical theology of divine revelation and human religion. In his *Church Dogmatics*, volume 1, Barth regards 'divine revelation as the abolition of religion and religion as unbelief'.[81] To be sure, Kraemer fails to acknowledge the reality that Barth uses the German *Aufhebung* to describe divine revelation as the abolition of religion and religion as unbelief (or faithlessness).

According to Barth, *Aufhebung* has double dialectical meanings—'sublation and elevation'.[82] In light of *Aufhebung*, God's revelation not only exposes and negates the sinful nature of religion, but also elevates, exalts/transforms it. Thus, for Barth, divine revelation does not destroy religion completely without exalting it. Barth said;

We do not need to delete anything from the admission that in His revelation, God is present in the world of human religion. What we have to discern is that God present in the world and God's elevation of religion is seen where God's transforming activity results in the Christian religion becoming a true religion.[83]

It is clear from Barth's statement that there is the dialectics of discontinuity and continuity between Christian faith and other faiths. Once other faiths become Christian faiths or what Barth called 'true religions', by the power of the Spirit, some little truths, lights, values of their former religions could help them develop their transforming lives.[84]

4. Religious values and translating the gospel

An evangelical trinitarian theology of religions should also think of the indispensability of other religious values for translating the gospel and developing local Christianity. Local Christianity is to be built upon the local culture. Two champions of world Christianity, Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh[85] advance the universality of the gospel

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80 Hendrick Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938), 113. For the critique of Kraemer's confrontational position, see also Timothy C. Tennent, in 'Post-Modernity, the Paradigm and the Pre-Eminence of Christ,' in *the 2014 Laing Lecture*, (London: London School of Theology, 2014), 2-3.

81 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 1.2, trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 280-325.

82 Garrett Green, 'Challenging the Religious Studies Canon: Karl Barth's Theory of Religion,' in *Journal of Religion*, 75 (1995): 473-486.

83 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I.2, 197.

84 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*: *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, vol. IV. 3. trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1961), 97. For a full account of this argument, see my article, David Thang Moe, 'Karl Barth against Religion, not Religions: Constructing His Dialectical Theology of Divine Revelation and Human Religion in Asia', in *Asia Journal of Theology*, vol. 31.1. (April 2017).

85 Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008).

through translation into all human cultures. By taking the centrality of the incarnation of Christ for all humanity, they distinguished the Christian gospel from the unchanging nature of the Islamic *Qur'an*. Unlike the *Qur'an*, the gospel is translatable into all human cultures.[86]

I relate this to my context in Myanmar. When it comes to the translation of the gospel and the Bible, Buddhism is indispensible because it produces an indigenous culture. Judson, a missionary-translator, used Buddhist terms for translating the Burmese Bible. He adopted Buddhist terms like *dukkha*, *karuna*, and *metta* for expressing the Christian use of suffering, compassion and love and so on.[87]

Recent scholarship has focused on the semiotic translation of the gospel for developing an intercultural theology.[88] *Semios* comes from the Greek word, meaning signs or symbols. The communicators of the gospel and the receivers of the gospel have to share the intercultural symbolic meanings of the gospel. The Gospel of John is rich in using the symbolic expression of Christ (see Jn 1:19—12:25).[89] In this respect, it is fair to say that Christians and those of other faiths experience the mystery of the Trinity and the meaning of the incarnate Christ through the signs and symbols we daily use.

However, when we use the signs for translating the gospel, it is important for us to maintain the integrity of the gospel and the uniqueness of Christ. This is because God became human in Jesus Christ without ceasing to be divine. In other words, God maintains the integrity of the Trinity in his economic relation to the sinful world.

5. Comparing theological divergences and ethical convergences

An evangelical trinitarian theology of religions should address the issues of theological differences and ethical similarities among world religions.[90] As I have said above, Muslims and Christians have theological differences in the issues of the Trinity and incarnation.

Buddhists and Christians have theological differences in the issue of the doctrine of God and salvation. While the former groups (Buddhists in this case) not only do not have the concept of creator, but they also believe in salvation as a kind of liberation by works (or an enlightenment in a Buddhist sense), Christians have the doctrine of God the creator and redeemer and think of salvation as a divine gift by grace (Eph 2:8).

Despite their theological differences, they have ethical similarities. For example, Christians have much to learn from Muslims about their devotional prayer (*Salat*). Too often, many Christians are too lazy to pray. Like

86 Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 47.

87 La Seng Dingrin, 'Is Buddhism Indispensible in Cross-Cultural Appropriation of Christianity in Burma?' in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, vol. 29. (2009): 3-22.

88 Robert J. Schrieter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 34.

89 See Craig K. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery and Community*, 2nd. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2003).

90 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 193.

devoted Muslims, Christians should reconsider prayer to be central to their spiritual and ethical journeys of faith in a right relation to God.[91]

If Muslims could teach Christians to be the better prayer-persons in their spiritual relation with God, Buddhists could teach Christians to become more moral disciples of Christ in their relation with their neighbours. God's commandments in the Bible can be summarized in twofold ethics: 'loving God and loving neighbours' (Mt 22:36-40). This echoes the holiness code in the Old Testament. 'Be holy as I am holy' (Lev 11:44). The ethics of Christians is to reflect the holy nature of God.

Reflecting the holy nature of the Trinity is all about moral virtue in our relation to others. In 1 Peter, the apostle uses the holiness code in four imperatives: set your hope (1:13); be holy (1:15); conduct yourself with fear (1:17) and love one another (1:21). Each of these commands or imperatives is grounded in the positive affirmation of who we are in Christ. In brief, the ethics of Christians is to have the right relationship with the triune God on the one hand, and the right relationship with our neighbours on the other hand.[92]

Moreover, Confucius could help Christians know what we mean by Christ's Golden Rule (Mt 7:12) in our moral relationships in family, church and society.[93] Confucius' principle of a mutual relation among people and the Buddhist ethics of *karuna* help Christians to be the merciful missionaries for charity towards the least. Jesus said that 'our compassionate relation to the poor determines our relation to him' (Mt 25:40).[94]

The charity we show to the poor echoes Christ's compassionate ministry to the poor. If we are not compassionate to the poor and do not do charity work for them, we do not really embody Christ who places the poor in the centre of his merciful ministry.

In brief, the Christian faith does not lead to a lawless life. Christ does not save us *by* the law, but *for* the law. This means that moral law plays an undeniable role in cultivating our faith for sanctification and holiness by the power of the Spirit. In Philippians 2:12, Paul exhorts Christians 'to work out or cultivate our salvation'.

Similarly, in Ephesians 2:9, Paul reminds us that Christ does not simply save *from* something (the power of sin and death) but also *for* something good (transformative life into the likeness of Christ). The power of the Spirit and the cultivating power of our faith by learning the ethics of other faiths could shape us to be the moral disciples of Christ in an immoral world.[95]

Moreover, other religious cultures could play the crucial role in developing local Christianity. Christianity

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91 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 193.

92 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 203.

93 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 200. For Confucius teaching, see Confucius, *The Analects*, translated and edited by D.C. Lau (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1979, 7.23; 3.13; 7.35.

94 For the relations of ethics between Christianity and Buddhism in particular, see Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 115-140.

95 Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 311.

is to be built upon the local religious culture. Thus, I would affirm that other religions are not merely the objects for conversion, but the neighbours to and from whom ethical insights must be both given and received for developing Christianity in the local culture and cultivating the Christian faith of holiness.

V Conclusion

This paper has proposed a trinitarian theology of religions as the framework for witnessing to the triune God among other religions from a missiological perspective. I have affirmed that the Father, Jesus the Son and the Spirit are differentiated in their characteristics, yet they are related in their inner communion within the one Godhead.

It is important to claim that we know the transcendent nature of the Trinity through the incarnate Christ by the Spirit. The Father sends both the Son and the Spirit as the two witnesses of the Trinitarian incarnation and his presence in the world. Just as God is in relation to us through Christ by the Spirit, our task is to witness to Christ among other faiths as the Saviour, liberator, reconciler and healer of the world.

As we witness to Christ in a pluralistic world, we must realize that God's prevenient grace is present among other faiths and their cultures pave the way for the gospel and enrich Christian theology. In light of this, I have argued that the interrelation between the universal incarnation of Christ and the cosmic presence and activity of the Spirit in a pluralistic world is central to our respectful communication with other faiths.

Let me conclude the paper by proposing three main goals of interreligious and interpersonal dialogue with other faiths. The first is to witness to Christ to followers of other faiths as Saviour and Lord of love and hope by inviting them to respond to him by the power of the Spirit, not by the human power of imperialism.

The second is to use other religious cultures, insights, languages and ethics for developing and cultivating Christian theology and morality without compromising the truth of the gospel.

The third is to promote social justice and nation building against injustice as God's earthly kingdom of justice and peace in cooperation with other faiths.

May our confession of faith, communication of faith and cultivation of faith continue embodying the very nature and work of the Trinity (the mission of God)!

Our Earth, Our Responsibility

Ebenezer Yaw Blasu

Introduction

The topic for our discussion contains only four words: Our Earth, Our Responsibility. The word 'Our' occurs twice so who is being referred to as 'our' in the topic? There are three groups that come to mind: all creatures on planet Earth, what I call 'Earthlings'; then all human beings, including Christians, hence 'Humanity'; and, finally members of the group called Christians in Science. However, charity, they say, begins at home. Since this is the first in the series of Faraday Lectures, organised by a particular group of people, aiming at getting the rest of humanity to wake up to our Creator's call to be responsible for and to the Earth I choose to direct my address more to the last category of the 'our' for now. That is, those of us seeing ourselves as Christians in Science, although humanity in general is by that implied to underpin it.

We must first be identified with what we would have others do. I set for myself, therefore, the task of looking at what it means ecotheologically when we say 'Our Earth'. Then I shall draw our attention to some reasons why we must be responsible for earthkeeping, making a few practical suggestions as to our responsibility, particularly because we are African Christians in Science.

I Whose Planet is the Earth?

1. Biblical issues

As I implied in my introduction earlier, our gathering over these two days has focussed on the objective of looking at how best we may be responsible humanly for planet Earth by educating ourselves. Our intention in this self-education is for better understanding of ecological issues as particularly relating to our background—religiously Christians who professionally serve as scientists and Christians who want to understand better how to relate their beliefs with science—so as to be better keepers of the Earth, even in our unique orientation.

In my view this is essentially a cultural matter. It is what we human beings think or want to think of and do on the Earth about the Earth by engaging our cultural occupation in Science with our Christian faith. It is seeking a bet-

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ter self-understanding of our faith in Christ in the face of scientific facts to enhance our ecological actions toward sustaining the Earth.

The late Ghanaian theologian, Kwame Bediako, refers to this process as gospel-culture engagement, and teaches us that the Bible must be central in any engagement of gospel and culture,[1] because Scripture is the yardstick and model for testing, pointing to and also controlling all engagements of gospel and culture in the continuing divine-human encounter which characterises our faith.[2] It is implied, therefore, that the Christian Scriptures offer us a hermeneutic for answering the question: Whose planet is the earth?

Yet we must tread cautiously, because Patrick Curry, author of *Ecological Ethics*, observes that although religions act as significant cultural repositories of human wisdom, and therefore have resources with which to meet ecological demands, most of them—especially the monotheistic ones—have lent themselves to a ruthlessly anthropocentric exploitation of nature.[3] Concerning Christianity, in particular, Lynn White Jr. is well known to have argued strongly against the western Christian anthropocentric view and the incorrect claim of a biblical justification in Genesis 1:28 to dominate nature; he blamed the wanton destruction of natural resources on this 'domination' theology.

In an influential paper in 1967 entitled *The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,* White claimed that in antiquity every tree, every spring had its guardian spirit. Before one cut a tree, dammed a brook, or killed an animal, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation. By destroying what he referred to as 'pagan animism', he claimed that 'Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to feelings of natural objects'.[4] Lynn White might have based his arguments on observations of the vast deforestation in Europe in the nineteenth century[5] for instance, which ecologists think resulted from the western Platonism (uncritical distinction between spiritual and material) and Christianity's theology of human devaluation and domination of nature. It was a theology that disenchanted or de-sacralised nature as essentially a passive and inanimate object with no intrinsic value, and so underscored the desire to do with it whatever humans will.[6]

The probability for humans to will

1 Kwame Bediako, 'Scripture as the hermeneutic of Culture and Tradition', *Journal of African Christian Thought,* Vol 4, No 1 (June 2001), 2-11 (p.2).

2 Bediako, 'Scripture as the hermeneutic of Culture and Tradition', 3.

3 Patrick Curry *Ecological Ethics—An Introduction, 2nd ed* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 138.

4 Lynn White Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science*, Vol. 155, March 1967, 1203-7. See also William P. Cunningham and Barbara Woodworth Saigo, *Environmental Science—A Global Concern*, 6th ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies Inc., 2001), 41.

5 Houghton, *Global Warming: The complete briefing*, cited by Y. B. Osafo, 'Reducing emissions from tropical forest deforestation: Applying compensated reduction in Ghana' in Paulo Moutinho and Stephan Schwartzman (eds.), *Tropical Deforestation and Climate Change*, 63-72 (64).

6 Patrick Curry *Ecological Ethics—An Introduction, 2nd ed* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 140.

and do so was high at the time perhaps because of the early struggles to find a relationship between Science and Theology. According to Arthur Holmes, by the beginning of the 17th century the *Novum Organon* or 'new science' revolution started, with Francis Bacon, the Lord Chancellor of England, being the most influential voice.[7] The Baconian scientists challenged both the humanists and scholastics (Aristotelian scientists) on the grounds of not restoring humanity's dominion over creation to relieve our estate and glorify God. Patrick Curry claims that 'Bacon notoriously advised that to "conquer and subdue Nature with all her children, bind her to your service and make her your slave," she must be "pierced", "vanquished" and "put to the question" (in other words, interrogated under torture); the new science [knowledge] that results will "extend bounds of human empire, as far as God Almighty in his goodness shall permit"'.[8]

For Bacon, scientists should formulate their educational purpose to develop knowledge that is full of hardcore facts or realities (thus appearing to be wholly objective), because we are directly aware of only physical things.[9] This began the journey of disparity between Theology and Science, revelation and empirical fact, faith and rationalism, resulting in scepticism towards reliance on the Bible to know whose planet is the Earth, particularly from its genesis.

Perhaps it is for this reason that David Bookless, Theological Director of A Rocha UK, makes the laudable suggestion, that to avoid being distracted and drawn into the never ending but ever-dividing argument over creationism and evolution, Christians should engage issues concerning the genesis of the Earth with the 'why' rather than the 'how'.[10] Even so, I personally think it may be necessary to consider that as Christians we became very certain in our minds of the 'how', so that we could hold fast and even deepen our faith when overwhelmed with newer scientific discoveries and assertions.

For with the contributions of science our worldview and faith are already being challenged to seek more understanding, rethinking our theology and pastoral practice positively. For instance, Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker, authors of *Journey of the Universe*, inform us that we are the first generation to learn the comprehensive scientific dimensions of the universe story. We now know that the observable universe emerged 13. 8 billion years ago, and we live on a planet orbiting our sun, one of the trillions of stars in one of the billions of galaxies in an unfolding universe that is profoundly creative and interconnected.

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7 Arthur F. Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Cambridge: William B, Eerdmans publishing, 2001), 75.

8 Curry, *Ecological Ethics,* 37.

9 According to Arthur Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy*, 75, 'Descartes' theory of indirect or representative perception had not yet taken over'. Moreover, this was the time when the Reformation had created a vacuum of authority in matters on which scripture is silent, and Protestantism was torn by differing interpretations of the Bible. Everywhere there was obvious need for an objective, universally

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assured system of acquiring knowledge independent of divisive beliefs.

10 David Bookless, *Planetwise* (UK, Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 19-20.

With our empirical observations expanded by modern science, we are now realizing that our universe is a single immense energy event that began as a tiny speck which has unfolded over time to become galaxies and stars, palms and pelicans, the music of Bach, and each of us alive today. The great discovery of contemporary science is that the universe is not simply a place, but a story—a story in which there is evidence that evolution does occur in which we are immersed, to which we belong, and out of which we arose.[11] Scientific claims point to an evolutionary story in which humans started to emerge some six to seven million years ago[12] as *Homo Africanus* (apelike beings in Africa). Science again points to *Homo sapiens* emerging two hundred thousand years ago, and it is the *Homo sapiens*—us—who in the last two centuries have radically altered the ecosystems of the planet to the point where scientists are now suggesting we call the current epoch, the Holocene epoch, the "Anthropocene epoch".[13]

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11 Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 2.

12 Swimme and Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe*, p. 2.

13 John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014), 9. Edward S. Ayensu, in a glossary to his book *Field Guide to the Volta River Basin* (Accra: Volta River Authority, 2013), 254, states that the Holocene epoch, formerly known as the 'Recent Epoch,' is the more recent of the two epochs of the Quarternary Period of the geological time. It is taken to have started around 12,000 years ago; its start is generally taken to be when humans first made enduring impressions on the surface of the Earth.

Imagine teaching in a mission-minded Christian university like the Presbyterian University College, Ghana. Present the above information to undergraduate students in a plural religious classroom context on Saturday evening. Then meet some of the same students on Sunday morning at chapel with a sermon that says God created the universe in five days and on the sixth day he created, not evolved, humankind from the soil before resting on the seventh day, knowing that all he created was good. Where is the connection between your pronouncements as a lecturer in the classroom and as pastor in the chapel to the same audience? May we not expect some serious challenges instead of motivating and deepening Christian faith of the students in the face of the huge overwhelming scientific facts?

Perhaps it should not be a surprise to have one bold person among your hearers who looks you in the face and points out that after all it was not a vast heaven and huge planet Earth that emerged initially as we read and imagine from the Bible. God did not create humans from clay, but we evolved from the apes. This was my experience when in 2010 some Environmental Science students in a Christian university reacted against my use of biblical insights and examples, arguing that faith and facts have no relationships nor did they pay fees for Christian calls for moral environmental responsibility. Indeed, that shock is what sent me on this academic and pastoral research.

In short, many questions may easily challenge the Christian faith of young minds when overwhelmed with hard core scientific facts and inductive reasoning as against deducted revelations

recorded in the Bible. Yet as Christians we know of the Earth first from faith in the biblical narratives. In the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews succinctly puts it 'By *faith* we understand that the *worlds* were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.'

2. The world

Christopher J. H. Write argues that the English expression, 'the world', as used in the Bible is complex and flexible. It rarely translates one Hebrew or Greek word.[14] It is noteworthy that the English word in the Letter to the Hebrews 11:3 is 'worlds', translating the Greek *aiōn*. This means 'universe or ages'. While the English usage implies that creation is related to the 'world' as a one-time act of one spatial arena, the meaning of this verse from the Greek sense is that it is God who has been creating and is still creating. It refers to a long period of time without reference to beginning or end; and suggests spaces other than the earthly space alone that we tend to imagine when reading the Bible.

It suggests that this God's acts of creating spaces have been occurring over long periods of time, in different epochs. Kwame Bediako argues that the Twi translation of this word 'aiōn' is *mresantee*, which is more accurate than the English, because it accounts for eras of time.[15] In other words, both

the Greek and the Twi give an opening for understanding creation as occurring over very long periods of time, and that the universe may not consist of only the earthly space as we know it or imagine it on reading the Bible.

From the history of Science we may infer that it was through monastic reflections seeking deeper understanding of faith in this biblical cosmology that theology was born and then astronomy as the first cosmic science. Hence, theology became the 'Queen of the Sciences'.[16] As I have indicated earlier, we in the twenty-first century have a more expanded mental-picture of the universe than generations before us due to the extensive and incredibly amazing findings and explanatory theories of Cosmological Sciences.[17]

The scientific evolution theories try to arrange a systematic and chronological out-birthing of the complex cosmos. They may be convincing to many, but still limited to only the 'observable universe' and significantly unable to explain the source of the already existing 'single point' mixture of visible 'luminous matter' and the invisible 'dark matter' that 'was trillions of degrees

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14 Christopher J. H. Wright, 'The World in the Bible', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (July 2010), 208.

15 Kwame Bediako, 'Christian Faith and Af-
rican culture—An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Journal of African Christian thought,* Vol. 13, No. 1, June 2010, 47.

16 Williams, L. Pearce, 'History of science', p. 1, Accessed 24/10/2014, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/528771/history-of-science, The natural philosophers insisted that genuine understanding of the natural order or laws demanded explanations of the cause, and would attribute it all to God, by faith. This explains why and how astronomy coupled to theology became the queen of the sciences.

17 Swimme and Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe*, 1.

hot and that instantly rushed apart' to become 'all of space and time and mass and energy'.[18]

To the Christian the source of even that single point of matter that may have evolved into the cosmos over billions of years in scientific assertions is still God.[19] This simply is the biblical record in Job 38 and 39 as well as Genesis 1 that we affirm by our Christian faith. In Job 38 God did not mince words but categorically declared his authorship of the earth (v 4) and the heavens (v 33) and all that there is in them, including darkness (v 9) and light (v 12). Then in chapter 39 God asks if Job could explain how living creatures are sustained on the earth.

3. God's earth?

In short, God was posing the same question we are considering today: Whose Planet is the Earth? Job was a farmer, but he couldn't answer any of these questions. So God showed Job that this universe belongs to him (God). Creation and created beings exist and are there because of God's power and sustaining hand. Then in Genesis we see further why it then becomes 'our earth', because God gives to humanity a responsibility.

We have a role as guardians of this theology of life. Science helps us only now to explain, at least the empirical aspects of the universe—how possibly what God had already created might have expanded thereafter and even that according to energy potencies already endowed it by the Creator. In other words, given that it works on only the empirically 'observable universe', Science has not and perhaps may never ever answer the question of the very pre-historic origin or non-observable phenomena that put the 'single point of cosmic matter' that became the universe in place. That story is still left to faith.

Summarising the content of their book *Journey of the Universe* as 'the newer story of the universe', Brian Swimme and Evelyn Tucker argue that their story is 'a story of *the story*'.[20] Perhaps this is because they realised rightly that theirs is only 'a historical account of how *our awareness* of this universe story came forth'.[21] In short, the *Journey of the Universe*, based on evolutionary philosophy, narrates only the story of how we human beings, with God's gracious endowment of scientific tools, are beginning to gain more systematic empirical insights, and guess some details about the summarised biblical cosmological record.

The universe story itself, however—its formation when there was nothing observable—still remains to be told. In my opinion, that is what the Bible has already revealed and human beings can know it only by faith. Faith then is also learning, a gaining of knowledge of reality without empiricism. It is the simple story or knowledge that God

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18 Swimme and Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe*, 5.

19 David Bookless points out that the difference between biblical cosmology and those of others is that only God creates out of nothing, while other accounts either have an already existing material from which the world is shaped or the world just emanated from a creator. See Bookless, *Planetwise*, 20.

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20 Swimme and Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe*, 3. Italic emphasis is mine.

21 Swimme and Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe*, 3. Italic emphasis is mine.

created the universe, and hence the earth and all in it, out of nothing.

Bookless asserts, agreeably, that good science is humanity seeking to explore and understand God's world; hence, true science can only ever inform and confirm God's word in the Bible.[22] But if God created, then the earth he created belongs to him. This also is the recorded biblical revelation that we believe as Christians. Again the Bible clearly spells this out unequivocally: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein…' (Ps 24:1).

God's ownership then doesn't include only the bare planet, but all the creatures he has made: 'For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine' (Ps 50:10-11). In my view, Christians in science may not shy from claiming and owning the Christian cosmic faith when faced with questions of how the earth began. Simply but convincingly we could present our faith-stance that God created the earth.

4. Our earth?

Therefore if asked whose planet is the earth, the Christian in science may unhesitatingly answer first 'the earth belongs to God'. But if the earth is God's how can we say it is ours, as posited in the topic under discussion?

As I have indicated earlier, when God interrogates Job, the Christian affirmation that the Earth is the Lord's is true and biblically unchallengeable, but does not, in another sense, preclude us

from saying the earth is ours. It can be argued convincingly from several texts in the same Scripture that God gave the earth to humanity to enjoy responsibly: imaging him as guardians of the very earth of which we are part. God gives the plants for food (Gen 1:29) and also 'everything that lives and moves' (Gen 9:3). The Psalmist is even more specific: 'The highest heavens belong to the Lord but the earth he has given to man' (Ps 115:16).

It is our Earth because it is our gifted home and where we get both material and spiritual support for life. From the very beginning just after creating the Garden of Eden, which ecotheologically may be a symbol of an ecosystem or even the ecosphere, God gave it to the first human couple with a charged responsibility 'to till it' or use it to support life 'and keep it' sustainably (Gen 2:15).

David Bookless suggests resolving the apparent conflicting ideas of the earth belonging to God and to us at the same time by considering the case of tenant farmers. 'It is their field to use productively and to enjoy its fruits, but it does not actually belong to them— it belongs to the owner'.[23] He derives this thought from land in the context of Israel: God gives them a promised fruitful land, but they must not sell it permanently because 'the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants' (Leviticus 25:23).

In his comment Bookless sees God's chosen nation not ultimately owning but using land under certain terms and conditions, which suggests that God is the landowner of planet earth, its flora,

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22 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 146.

23 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 29.

fauna, water bodies, atmosphere and geological contents. Yet he has given us the use of this good earth on condition that we are responsible to him for how we use and leave it.[24] But how have we used the good earth given to us so far—how is our earth today?

II Our Earth Today

That the good earth that God entrusted to us is today miles away from what it was is well known. So this is not the place to spell out the current ecocrisis or its context in detail, but since it is a primary reason why we are talking about being responsible, it must at least be pointed out.

Patrick Curry asserts rightly that irrespective of controversies our earth is facing a serious ecological crisis—considering climate change, biodiversity loss, habitat challenges and pollution all over the world.[25] The socio-economic impacts of climate change, for instance, appear to be not only similar in the global South, especially in many parts of Africa, but also more than in the North.

Michael Northcott sees the situation as a disturbing spiral or cyclic life undergirded by poverty. People rely on wood and charcoal for cooking and heating. While smoke and interior pollution from fires cause cardiovascular and respiratory disease in millions of households, dependence on timber for cooking and heating puts increasing strain on the land. As forests are thinned for fuel, soil thins as well, and the water table drops, so making conditions even harder for food growing and reducing the availability of potable water.[26]

The situation is not different from our local experience too as the following instance suggests. In 2010, a forty-five year old woman from Bawku West District in the Upper East Region of Ghana granted an interview to researchers from the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST), who were reviewing the extent of the socio-economic impacts of Ghana's ecocrisis. She responded,

> I have seven children…The floods collapsed our three rooms and washed our crops…Hunger stared us straight in the face…Getting firewood is now very difficult and most times I have to climb trees for dried branches… sometimes I do this with my baby on my back…[27]

This woman's lamentation and her reference to 'getting firewood' points to the wider anthropogenic[28] causes of climate change, which impacts both human and non-human communities in many parts of Ghana. The results of climate change are being reflected in floods, loss of landed property, crop failure, hunger, land degradation, lack

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24 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 29-30.

25 Curry, *Ecological Ethics,* 15-18.

26 Michael S. Northcott, *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2007), 49.

27 National Climate Change Committee (NCCC), *Ghana goes for Green Growth, National Engagement on Climate Change, Discussion Document*, *Summary,* (Accra: Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, (MEST), (November, 2010), 28.

28 See Patrick Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, pp. 201-202. Curry, asserts that a 'significant amount of climate change is certainly almost anthropogenic (human-caused)'.

of wood energy, vulnerability of people to various life-threatening dangers and gradual loss of biodiversity. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Ghana corroborates this reality with further evidence of difficulties with potable water as inland water bodies dry up and water tables fall deeper; food insecurity resulting from devastations of harvested crops due to high temperature and plant pathological factors.[29]

I have argued elsewhere that if climate change in Ghana contributes to a breakdown in human and non-human wellbeing, then it goes against the total wellness of all beings (3 John 1:2), which is the divine will, because it denies them their basic life essential needs.[30] Humans and other animals and birds and fish suffer food insecurity, ill health, and unsafe habitat, leading to more frequent migrations in search of safer and greener pastures. In addition, plant life is subjected to both the vagaries of the deteriorating climatic conditions and wanton destructive behaviour of humans.[31]

Patrick Curry, asserts that a 'significant amount of climate change is certainly almost anthropogenic (human-caused)'.[32] It stands to reason that if we humans are the cause of crisis in the good earth bequeathed us then all

of us human beings, including Christians in science must be involved in resolving the crisis.

III Responsibility for Planet Earth

There are many reasons why people do or do not get involved in environmental issues. In the West, particularly in the United Kingdom, David Bookless has collected the opinions of many Christians concerning the Bible and environment. He classified the results and explains them as follows:

(1) Insidious—Ecology and environmental issues are a bit dodgy, and Christians should keep well clear;

(2) Irrelevant- Caring for the Earth is not important for Christians. The gospel is about saving souls, not saving seals;

(3) Incidental—I am glad somebody is already caring for the planet, just as long as it doesn't have to be me;

(4) Integral—Concern for the whole of God's creation is fundamental to the God of the Bible and to his purpose for human beings.[33]

I do not have extensive information in the African situation yet,[34] and I don't know where each of us here falls. But because we are Christians we may ideally want to identify with the fourth class, at least since that is the purpose of this gathering. For what it means is

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29 Environmental Protection Agency 2005, Ghana State of Environment Report 2004, EPA, Accra Ghana, 6.

30 Ebenezer Yaw Blasu, '"Compensated Reduction" as Impulsion for Reducing Deforestation: An African Christian Theological Response', *Journal of Christian African Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1, June 2015, 19.

31 Blasu, '"Compensated Reduction" as Impulsion for Reducing Deforestation', 19.

32 Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, 201-202.

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33 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 13-16.

34 I understand this concern is a research area for some M.Th. students of Akrofi-Christaller Institute (ACI). Hopefully we may get some insights when they finalise their work.

that caring for creation is essential to following Jesus Christ. Although that is not to say that we must all be field environmentalists or professional eco-theologists, yet as Bookless contends, 'it is not an optional extra, but part of the core of our faith'[35] and we need be impelled naturally for it.

My opinion concerning what can best impel or motivate the African Christian to act responsibly for the earth and to do things like reduce deforestation, as an ecological action for instance, is that since the earth ultimately belongs to God, failure to let God's concerns for his environment, rather than centralise it on monetary incentives, as being advocated by some people, could be classified as 'ecological sin'.[36]

I think the same argument holds here also as we discuss our responsibility for our earth. For me our failure to do all things, including ecological actions, for the glory of God (I Cor 10:31) or not to be constrained by *love* for God (2 Cor 5:14) and neighbour (including non-human life) to obey him (John 15:10) is sin. The Greek Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, is the first one in the Christian world to draw the attention of the world community to the seriousness of the ecological problem.[37] He describes our current destruction of the environment as 'ecological sin' and

'crime against creation,'[38] which, as I have once said, affirms Paul's assertion in Romans 8:20-22 that creation already suffers innocently God's curse due to humankind's sin against God (Gen 3:17).[39] In order not to be disobedient children of God we need to be responsible for our Earth.

Even then the Earth's crisis has been already largely anthropogenic—due to human sin—since soon after the creation of humanity until now. Using a triangular relationship between God, humans and nonhuman creation, David Bookless explains that 'when human beings turn against God, this not only breaks the relationship with God, but also affects the other sides of the triangle'.[40] This is because creation has relational and an interdependent nature explaining why the sinful fall of humanity brought a curse on the whole Earth, from whence the Earth's crisis began. We need to pay responsible attention to our Earth because scientists are human and so part of the earth's problem.

In analysing the causes of ecocrisis, Patrick Curry compiles from litera-

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35 Bookless*, Planetwise*, 16.

36 Blasu, '"Compensated Reduction" as Impulsion for Reducing Deforestation', 24.

37 Metropolitan John of Pergamon, 'Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato si - A Comment.' Accessed, 19 June 2015, http://www.goarch.org/news/metropolitanjohnpergamon-06182015.

38 Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, cf. John Chryssavgis, 'Address in Santa Barbara, California (8 November 1997); On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Bronx, New York, 2012.' Cited by Pope Francis, 'Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of The Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home, on 24th May 2015. http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf. (See also Grim and Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*, p. 166.)

39 Blasu, '"Compensated Reduction" as Impulsion for Reducing Deforestation,' 24.

40 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 37.

ture the summarised formula I=PLOT, where I is ecological Impact resulting from the interactions of P (Population size increases), L (Life styles of consumerism), O (organisational ideologies such as in political will) and T (Technology and Science that consumes energy and pollutes the ecosystem). Thus, despite all the good that we can and must attribute to technoscience for development on our earth, it is also a significant contributor to our earth's crisis.

Grim and Tucker observed many workers whose efforts together gave birth to the American Environmental Movement, but it was 'with the publication in 1962 of *Silent Spring*, [by Rachael Carson] documenting the devastating effects of DDT on bird life' that 'the contemporary environmental movement was born'.[41] DDT was an Agricultural Science product and tool for boosting food production, yet only when Carson pointed out its evil effects due to non-godly and non-ethical application was it banned in 1972.[42]

My point in short is that science and technology minus godliness and morality is devastation of our earth. What then must be our responsibility?

IV Responsibility as Christians in Science

Our Lord Jesus teaches us this life principle that much is required from him to whom much is given (Luke 12:48). I presume that. by virtue of our orienta-

tion as both Christians and scientists. we are more positioned to participate in creation care praxis than others. Perhaps, unlike the non-science Christians, we have better chances of appreciating ecological phenomena, but like them we also have the religious orientation that can motivate us to take ecological action for a sustainable earth.

Orienting ourselves in religious traditions opens to us the understanding of the universe as an ever-present and all-embracing reality. It provides a sense of direction and purpose to situate humans in a larger cosmological reality, both in the present and also into an unknown future.[43] Christianity images this cosmological reality as God the Transcendent Creator and the unknown future as the final eschatological paradise.

Thus the desire to participate in the eternal paradise ecosystem of the New Heaven and Earth (or Kingdom of God) impels us to take such ecological actions to please God, our cosmic reality, now in the temporal life on earth. He has called us apart, like all other human beings within creation, to image him in resolving the ecocrisis.[44] Moreover, many people, including governments, place their faith, though vainly, in new science and technology alone to resolve present and future ecological problems on the earth.[45]

Our major responsibility, therefore in my view as Christians in Science, is first to hold fast our faith in the face of intriguing scientific and technological

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41 Grim and Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*, 79.

42 Grim and Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*, 79.

43 Grim and Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*, 96.

44 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 89.

45 Curry, Ecological Ethics, 23.

discoveries about our earth. The study and practice of science should lead us to doxological experiences so that we become agents of closing the science-theology gap, something that is needed in our generation to improve human-earth relations for sustaining our earth. Thomas Berry, a scientist and Catholic theologian, stated that 'mutually enhancing human-Earth relations were critical to reverse the destruction of nature in the contemporary period'.[46]

Thus we need to pursue appropriate ways of reviewing and reconstructing our theology and integrating our faith in interpreting reality in the laboratory and from field tests as well as in the practice of pastoral care. As Bookless suggests we may have to live on our earth wholly as if creation matters: in discipleship as we image God like Jesus who did everything to salvage all creation; in worship as we wonder at God's creation from newer scientific discoveries; in our lifestyle as we avoid the idolatry of consumerism but celebrate simplicity; and be in mission as we advocate and lead the rest of humanity also to participate in creation care praxis.[47]

Writing separately on the same topic Calvin B. deWitt and David Bookless argued and made distinctively clear that care of creation is part of Christian mission.[48] Since I am in the Christian academy, one way in which I have decided as my mission to lead young students to be morally responsible for our earth is to advocate an alternative approach in the curriculum for studying Environmental Science at undergraduate level in Christian higher educational institutes. I am proposing African Christian Ecotheology (ACE) as the alternative interdisciplinary undergraduate course. For in my view students in all academic programmes whether in the Sciences or the Humanities may be potential contributors either to the environmental hazards or solutions, depending on use of their knowledge gained.

A significant number of the environmental threats to terrestrial life may result from our application, or rather misapplication, of the cultural and technological knowledge gained from education, apart from increasing population etc. In his book, *A Moral Climate—the ethics of global warming*, Michael S. Northcott observes that through technology and economic and political artifice, and because of growth in the human population, the powers of modern humanity have grown to the point that humans are now the strongest biological force on earth.

But these new powers have not been accompanied by a growth in moral responsibility for the condition of the planet. On the contrary, as technology has heightened human power over nature, modern humans are increasingly alienated from the earth and their fellow creatures. People are therefore increasingly poorly equipped—ecologi-

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46 Thomas Berry, 'The New Story', in *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 123-37. See also Grim and Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*, 59.

47 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 88-143.

48 Calvin B, deWitt, 'To strive to safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Sustain and Renew the life of the Earth' in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, *Mission in Twenty-First Century—*

Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission (Maryknoll : Orbis Books, 2008), pp 84-93. That of David Bookless is on pages 94-103.

cally, morally and politically—to deal with the consequences and dangers of these enlarged powers both for the earth and for human wellbeing.[49]

Northcott points out that we live in times when both technological and cultural (politics, economics, educational) advancements have increasingly become powerful tools used by humans to dominate nature, without a moral conscience nor ability to undertake any redeeming actions regarding the dangers threatening the earth and its inhabitants including our own wellbeing. Consequently, irrespective of the field of academic or professional studies, education must impact students' environmental responsibility based on their understanding of themselves as humans made in the image of God.

As I said earlier, each student, as a human, in higher education is either a potential conserver or a threat to our environment, perhaps more than the lower educated or non-educated, depending on the response of our use of the higher knowledge gained. The tension between being a threat to and a conserver of earth at higher educational level is perhaps more pronounced in the case of Science students.

It is not difficult, for instance, to see Computer Science graduates from Christian higher institutions managing computer hardware firms, and these may be the first to be accused of polluting the environment indiscriminately with their dangerous computer waste. They would have learnt from Environmental Science that one function of the earth is to serve as the sink for waste products. Are the young Ghana-ian chemical engineers who operate *galamsay* (small scale mining) with their expertise not a threat of pollution to our water bodies? Can we exonerate the Agricultural Scientist from the impoverishment of soil and inland water for food and fish production, using uncontrolled or improperly regulated inorganic substances?

I notice a serious problem from the data being analysed in my current research. It concerns a possible danger of infertility that seems to loom over the heads of women in the research area if they continue drinking water from the river in which tilapia farming is in progress. For I am told the farmers use a certain hormone (an androgen called 17α-methyl-testosterone) to 'unisex' the fryers so as to gain earlier market weight at lower cost.[50] Scientifically and logically a hormone that turns female fish to male will probably render a woman infertile as an accumulated residual effect.

Some of the participating farmers in this study seem to be aware of such possible danger.[51] They protect themselves from possible impotency by wearing rubber gloves and by strict attention to hand washing with carbolic soap.[52] But the unsuspecting girls living down-stream drink and wash with that water unawares and without any protection.

My argument is that notwithstanding the good that science entails for development, teaching it without a mind-

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49 Northcott, *A moral climate*, 6.

50 Edem Agbattor, interview at Sokpoe-Vogorme, 24 February 2016.

51 Mathew Agbattor, interview at Sokpoe-Vogorme, 24 February 2016.

52 Wisdom Kwame Blasu, interview at Sokpoe Bodzodipe, 28 March 2016.

set to induce moral transformation and responsibility for preserving our earth is a mission only half accomplished. Hence, the need for a holistic studying of Environmental Science, integrating it with faith to emphasise interrelationships between God, humans and the earth, and hopefully inducing moral responsibility for our Earth in the process.

I call the alternative curriculum African Christian Ecotheology because we are Africans and the move in our generation to practise theology the African way has been well established. Therefore we may need to engage with indigenous knowledge systems and the knowledge within other faiths to retrieve, re-evaluate and reconstruct values, ethics, and norms that promote creation care in Africa. Armed with both science and Christian doctrine we may better interpret the symbols and rituals and how they motivate ecological actions.

For instance, I found among the Sokpoe-Ewe that even birthing rites can prime babies for future creation care. As an animal reproductive physiologist I could appreciate the ritual of insisting that a new mother remain indoors with the baby especially in the first three days. During these three days and even until the seventh day the new mother is virtually confined in *didexorme* (maternity room) and provided with *didekple* (a special meal from roasted corn flour, red palm oil and salted fish). The confinement could be a way of ensuring immunoglobulin fortification for good health in the ecosystem by making colostrum available to the baby, while relying on the local food indirectly cares for creation by avoiding

the otherwise huge and complex chain of climate-change processes and use of resources that would have gone into an imported industrialised formula.

Then, with my biblical knowledge of the Pauline warning against the vulnerability of humans to evil spirits in the ecosphere, I understand the precarious cosmo-vision of the Sokpoe-Ewe and hence the ritual of placing *xornudzorgoe* (food particles in a small gourd) hung at the door of the *didexorme*. This is to ward off *adzetorwo* (homophagus spirits) from eating the baby's flesh. My understanding that the earth is part of a vast cosmic space and an individual can be lost unless rooted in a certain family, society, culture and land explains why the baby must be left alone to cry and found by a loving woman and named by the father to signify paternal inheritance during the outdooring ceremony.

Prof Joshua Kudadjie, a Christian ethicist of the Methodist Church of Ghana, conducted a similar research among the Ada, whose outdooring rites are similar to those of the Sokpoe-Ewe in many respects. Perhaps bereft of serious science background, particularly cosmological science, or being more focused on ethics than science, he downplayed and discarded this aspect of the ritual from his reconstructed outdooring liturgy.[53]

In addition, those of us who are animal producers may have to consider how best to inculcate ideas from biocentric ethics, particularly animal welfare ideas from Peter Singer's ani-

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[53] Joshua Kudadjie, 'Researching morals and rituals', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (December 1999): 35-43.

mal liberation movement[54] in our production systems. Generally all of us, scientists or not, as belonging to the human species of earthlings, may consider allowing our love for and obedience to God to be our moral impulsion for responsibility for our earth. We may begin with a decision to take the ecological actions we may be most comfortable with.

Some of us, especially city dwellers, may reduce and supplement industrialised food with increased levels of local food from backyard gardens, revisiting the 'operation feed yourself' and 'domestication' philosophies of the late Ghanaian politicians, General Ignatius Kutu Ackeampong and Daniel Lartey, respectively. For some it may be simple self-discipline to avoid wastage of utilities, especially electricity and water; reducing usage of 'take-away' polythene bags or stop throwing empty water sachets out of moving vehicle windows.

Scientists in the church may consider it as mission to encourage churches and Christians within them to act in an ecologically ethical way in taking and implementing church decisions such as avoiding siting chapels in waterways, greening church premises and homes of members, and discouraging 'galamsay' by refusing big harvest donations from such enterprises. We may be involved in prayer and Bible study and talking about our faith, alongside

scientific and practical theological research, environmental education and sharing our lives as we explore sustainable earth community.

The important thing is that, whether we accept a creationist or evolutionary approach, we must realise that we are part of creation and at the same time we are to care for creation because we are made in God's image.[55]

V Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that the earth is the Lord's but is also ours because God gifted it to us as our home to use and leave it. However, historically since our inception on God's earth, we humans have damaged the relationship between us and God and other creations with our disobedience or ecological sin. This brought ecological crisis to our Earth.

Perhaps Christians in Science, apart from championing many useful scientific discoveries, may also be seriously contributing to the ecocrisis when we employ science and technology without theocentric ecological ethics. This in itself is a major reason we should engage in earthkeeping responsibilities. Despite the tension between our scientific facts and our revealed faith, we have responsibility for our earth, because our God to whom the earth belongs, gifted it to us on condition that we use it responsibly.

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54 Peter Singer, Animal Liberation, (London: Granada), cited by Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, 44.

55 Bookless, *Planetwise*, 146-147.

Creation and Holistic Ministry: A Study of Genesis 1:1 to 2:3

Iain Provan

'In the beginning was our father Abraham; and God created him *ex nihilo* from the dust of the ground and called him out of Babylonia to found the church.'

It is conceivable that the Bible might have begun in this way. Certainly many Christian readers have behaved as if it did begin in this way. And not a few Old Testament theologians of fairly recent times have offered intellectual comfort for this idea, by arguing that the earliest, most distinctive creedal formulations found in Israel omitted all mention of any events prior to the Patriarchs. The same is true, they have alleged, of the most ancient narrative sources behind the Pentateuch.

The impression is thus created that everything in the biblical story prior to the Patriarchs must be of secondary importance for us as Christians, theologically and practically—that it is the great story of *redemption* upon which we should focus our attention, and not, to the same extent, the equally great story of creation. And this has certainly been the implicit or explicit view of many ordinary Christians I have known over the years, including many evangelical Christians. Abraham we know—a little; Moses we know a little better, even if we do not like him very much; but what does *creation* have to do with anything? Of what use are Genesis 1 and 2 to Christians, except as a stick that can usefully be employed to beat those who do not believe in this or that theory about the origins of things?

I Redeemed for What?

Which is the reason, of course, that so many Christian people have an exceptionally good grasp of why the theory of evolution is wicked, or why one theology of the atonement is better than another, but have a much higher degree of difficulty in answering this question: what are we *redeemed for*? It is clear enough, I suppose, what it is that we are redeemed *from*: nearly every Christian testimony will give substantial attention to that point, sometimes offering far more detail about the speaker's previous life than the audience ever truly wished to hear. We all know, or we think that we do, what it is that we are redeemed *from*; but what are we re-

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deemed *for*?

- To tell others about Christ, certainly; but what if every other person were, hypothetically, already a *follower* of Christ? What if that aspect of our Christian calling were no longer necessary, because everyone had been saved: would there be anything left over for us to do, as Christians?
- Perhaps by then we would have passed beyond this present realm and would be with the Triune God for eternity; but what would we be doing *there* in his presence, as inhabitants of the new heavens and the new earth?
- Worshipping, certainly; but anything else? What are we redeemed *for*?

It is, in my experience, a question that many modern Christians find it difficult to answer. Indeed, they have not really *asked* it; for the Christian discipling that they have received has emphasized only redemption *from* something, and that is how they have come to conceive of the Christian life overall. They have a fairly good idea, therefore, about what they are *against*; but they are vague to the point of being incapacitated when asked what it is that they are *for*. They have an exceedingly narrow view, in fact, of what it means to be a Christian. They conceive of the Christian life mainly as a matter of *escaping* from things—

- from a decadent culture, perhaps;
- from unsatisfactory relationships;
- from creation itself, which is, they will sometimes gleefully tell you, destined for the fire.

There is often something of a desire to escape even from the self—from the humanness of things, from the earthiness of it all, from the embodied nature of things.

All of this, I suggest, is related to (although not exhaustively explained by) a fundamental theological problem; that such Christians—and there are many, many of them—possess no sufficiently robust idea of creation, with which to undergird and explain their idea of redemption. They have no idea of the larger canvas upon which the story of redemption is painted; the ideal or the end towards which redemption is pointed. Their Bible *indeed* begins, for all practical purposes, with Abraham—if they ever read the Old Testament at all, rather than sticking entirely to the New. It is with Abraham that their Bible story begins, and not with creation.

Holistic Christians they therefore cannot be. Holistic ministry they therefore cannot practise, for they have not even conceived, yet, of its *possibility*. If any model of ministry has been plucked from Genesis 1–11, it is only the model of the ark-dwellers accompanying a modern-day Noah: sailors tossed around on the stormy seas of life; desperately struggling to prevent the chaotic world outside from leaking in; pausing in their travels only occasionally and briefly to see if they can find any unsuspecting pagans outside the ship, so that they can disable them, rush them on board, shut fast the doors, and sail off into the sunset to be again the church of God.

Whither they are sailing, of course, is a mystery to all concerned; for they have lost the map for the journey. It is enough that they are sailing together, safe from the storm.

II The God of Creation

The real Bible that we truly possess, of course, does not begin with Abraham. It does not even begin with Noah. It begins with Creation, and with a God who is involved with, open to, generative of, the whole of creation, and not just with a selected minority of his human creatures. It begins famously and ambiguously: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and empty*; or, more likely in the original Hebrew, When *God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and empty*.

Fierce discussions have been generated by this ambiguity, usually centring on the question of whether or not the creation of all things is *ex nihilo*, 'out of nothing'. And whether the creation of all things is indeed 'out of nothing'—whether nothing existed before the one God initiated its existence—is of course an interesting and important theological question, to which the answer for believers in the one God is presumably, although certainly speculatively, 'yes'. It is an important question. But it is doubtful whether *Genesis chapter 1* is at all interested in this question—the question of the creation of *all* things.

- Certainly it is interested in the creation of the things that have to do with us.
- It is interested in the ordering of things such that life on this planet is viable.
- It is interested in God's creative activity that *makes* a viable, and indeed a blessed, life possible here.

But there is no real evidence in the passage as a whole that the origin of *all things* is the focus of attention.

Indeed, you will notice a rather deafening silence in the passage as to the specific origin of at least *two* things that are mentioned. We hear that God spoke light into being (verse 3), and the sky (verse 4), and the land (verse 5), and everything else that follows; but we do not hear anything about the origin of either the darkness or the waters, first mentioned in verse 2. *They* are simply *there*, as God's creative activity begins.

They already exist, before God begins to form his words that will change everything. And their ultimate origin is not explicitly addressed in Genesis chapter 1, any more than the ultimate origin of evil in this world is addressed in Genesis chapter 3. Evil is simply there, already, in the form of the snake, before the human pair succumb to it. In Genesis 1, darkness and water are already there, too; and their presence, too, is shrouded in mystery that the text itself does not seek to dispel.

Once this reality is perceived, then the question of precise translation in Genesis 1:1 becomes less important than it has sometimes seemed; for whatever the better translation, it seems very likely on general grounds that the creation of our reality being pictured for us here does *not* involve a completely new beginning in absolute terms, moment zero in the Big Bang (as it were)—does *not* involve that, but rather, already, involves an act of divine redemption. That is, redemption is already bound up with creation in Genesis 1.

Here is the earth, formless and empty, 'formless and void' (as older translations put it). It is a wasteland, uninhabitable by life, and certainly by human life. It is indeed marked, not by

the order necessary for life, but by chaos. That is the significance, biblically, of the darkness and the water.

Darkness is a uniformly negative phenomenon in the Bible: a cloak for evildoing, a symbol of ignorance and folly, and an image for death or the grave; and itself a spiritual power. It is the natural environment for evil happenings.

Water is both necessary for life, and yet in large amounts dangerous and deadly to human beings. The use of the Hebrew word *tehom* here in verse 2, translated usually into English as 'the deep,' is particularly ominous; for it evokes the name of the dreadful sea-monster Tiamat, out of whose carcass, Babylonian myth claims, the world was carved. Other parts of the Bible also borrow from this same Babylonian mythology in developing a distinctly Hebrew view of creation.

These other texts allude to a cosmic battle between the God of Israel and a sea-monster variously named as Leviathan or Rahab, or simply described as a serpent or a dragon. The 'waters' or 'floods' are indeed pictured in various OT texts, including several of the psalms, as restless, chaotic entities always liable to break into God's ordered world and to overwhelm the believer, so that life is put in danger and the psalmist feels himself sinking into the realm of death, the realm of She'ol beneath.

Water and darkness bespeak chaos. They are unruly and evil powers which, left to themselves, rise up in opposition to God, and are always looking for ways to disrupt the ordered and life-giving environment which God provides so that his creatures can flourish.

Here is the earth, then—form-less and empty, a wasteland marked by chaos. Here is the earth, ready for God's creative activity to begin, as God's Spirit hovers over or sweeps across its expanse. Perhaps the picture is of the aftermath of battle, as the victor surveys the subdued enemy, or perhaps it is simply one of containment and control. We cannot be sure, although the idea that God is sovereign over this chaotic reality, sovereign over the darkness and the waters, is already clear enough. Here is the beginning point of the world that we know; and out of the silence God speaks.

III Creation

'Let there be light.' The first creative act of many, each of them following a similar pattern. God speaks, and something comes into being, in obedience to the divine word—a fitting response of the created to the Creator. Something comes into being; and it is something 'good'. That is the point of the whole exercise: to create a good place, full of good things, reflecting the character of a God who is fundamentally good. Notice here, incidentally—just to underline what I was saying a moment ago—that the darkness is noticeably *not* called good in itself. It is only the light that is pronounced 'good', in the first instance. But notice also, on the other hand, that the darkness is not *destroyed* by God in creation, even *though* it is not good in itself. What happens is that the darkness is in fact redeemed.

The enemy is turned into a friend, and made to serve a useful purpose as 'night' in relationship to the 'day'. Darkness becomes part of the good creation, through God's creative and redemptive action; and thus God reveals

himself right at the beginning of the Bible story in terms that will become clearer only as the story progresses. Here is a God whose interactions with creation are marked by generosity; a God of whom it will recurrently be said in the Old Testament that he is a compassionate and a gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness (e.g. Exodus 34:6). And so the darkness is *not* destroyed, but redeemed and made useful.

First the light is created, then; and secondly the sky, envisaged in verses 6–8 as separating the waters above it (the source of rain, snow and hail) from the waters beneath it—the waters that will shortly become the seas. Here are the 'heavens' introduced to us already in verse 1; and now in verses 9 and 10, we begin to hear of the earth. Dry land emerges, as the waters are ordered— in the same way that the darkness was ordered—so that they, too, serve a useful purpose. They are no longer the all-encompassing and life-denying 'deep' of verse 2, leaving no space on the planet where life may flourish. Now they are contained and constrained, so that the dry land can appear which will later support terrestrial life.

Notice once again that the waters in verses 6–9 are not themselves referred to as 'good'. They are chaotic and dangerous entities redeemed, rather than good things created. It is only once the whole process of reordering has been completed half-way through day 3, and all the waters have found a useful function to perform, that we are finally told in verse 10 that 'God saw that it was good' (verse 10).

The *creation* of dry land then leads on naturally to the *development* of the land so that it can support life, in verses 11–13; and verses 14–19 complete the backdrop against which life will emerge by filling in the details of the firmament. They describe the sun, the moon and the stars that will provide light and also the chronological framework within which human life, in particular, may be ordered and enjoyed: for they will serve as 'signs to mark seasons and days and years' (verse 14). Disorder is slowly and surely giving way to order—to a world in which it will be possible to live well, because it is 'good'.

The stage is thus fully set; and life emerges next, to act out its role on this stage—the diversity of creatures that live in the sea and the birds that fill the sky (verses 20–23); and the creatures who live on the land (verses 24–25). And it is all *indeed good*. God has created the whole thing with goodness as his guiding principle. He has drawn into this process even those things which in themselves did not start out as good. It is all *good*—for its own sake, and before human beings ever appear on the scene.

- It does not require our presence to be good.
- It is not good only because of our presence.
- It is good because God made it so, and has said it is so.
- It is the very nature of the reality that we inhabit.

IV Divine Image

Into this good creation, finally, come human beings (vv. 26–29). Why? To be the bearer of the divine image (v. 26)! What does that mean? In terms of the immediate context of verse 26 within Genesis 1, it means that we have been

given the task of 'ruling over' the other creatures, and indeed of 'subduing' the earth (verses 26, 28). It is these tasks that mark human beings out from the sea creatures and the birds, for example, who are also commanded to 'be fruitful and multiply' and to fill their environments, but are not commanded to 'rule over' or 'subdue' anything (compare verses 22 and 28). And so the image of God appears to be directly bound up with these particular commands. What is implied by these commands? Their language is strong.

The second verb (in English 'subdue') is a translation of the Hebrew verb *kabash*. It is the language of conquest, usually military conquest. It reappears in passages like Numbers 32:22, 29 and Joshua 18:1, where we read of the land being 'subdued' before God and his people; or 2 Samuel 8:11, where we read of David 'subduing' all the nations. Warfare therefore lurks in the background of this verb.

The first verb (in English 'have dominion, rule over') is a translation of the Hebrew verb *radah*. It is the language of government. It is used elsewhere in the Old Testament of kings governing their subjects (e.g. 1 Kings 4:24); of Israel ruling over those who had previously oppressed them (Isaiah 14:2); of the upright ruling over the wicked (Psalm 49:14). *Government* is envisaged in the use of this verb, especially royal government, with its associated tasks, such as establishing and maintaining justice.

Our Genesis language describing the divine commission to human beings is therefore strong language. It is language implying aggressive action taken by a would-be king to win his kingdom by force and then to govern it

well. Like the hostile forces opposing the Israelites and their leaders as they entered the Promised Land, the earth is portrayed as confronting, at the moment of creation, these *human* invaders with their royal pretensions—those who come to multiply and to fill the earth, and must conquer it and then govern it if this multiplication and filling is to happen.

That is the reality of creation in Genesis 1. It is a hard-edged reality; and it is not a welcome reality to many, who hold out a more *romantic* vision of the world—a vision that knows only of harmony in the origins of things, and nothing of struggle; and a vision which feeds a romantic view of our *present* reality as well, in which struggle is frowned upon and harmony heavily advocated.

The romantic vision of the world, however, would require a different Genesis text. It would require a text that speaks in these terms: 'Do not fill the earth, but reduce your human impact upon it; be kind to it, rather than subduing it; and seek to live in harmony with other creatures rather than governing them.' Such a text does not in fact exist in Genesis 1, which does not share any modern, romantic notions about creation. Genesis 1 does not indulge in that mushy and naive, often profoundly anti-technological, sentimentality about 'Nature' that we hear more and more around us. Genesis 1 views nature, not as a benevolent deity anxious to embrace us all as we abandon hope of controlling her, but as something that requires constantly to be governed if life is to flourish. And human beings have been given that task of governing, as kings in their newly-created kingdom.

That is what being created in the image of God in Genesis 1 is mainly about. But notice that it is indeed as the images of God that human beings have been called to this task. This is an important point to emphasize; for the language of Genesis 1:28 has sometimes been misunderstood as justifying the rapacious exploitation of the earth that is *also* a prominent feature of our modern experience—the other side of the coin from romantic idealism, and the reason that so many are attracted to it. 'God has legitimated our conquest of the earth', it is said; 'let us get on enthusiastically with our task and suck out every last resource from it for our benefit and pleasure.' So it is said. But it is as images of God that we are given this task of ruling and subduing. It is not as autonomous, self-created beings.

Here it is helpful to understand the probable cultural and historical background of the term 'image' in Genesis 1. It was common in the ancient Near East for great emperors to set up images or statues of themselves, 'likenesses' of themselves, in conquered territories that they were now claiming as their own. The image would function, in a manner of speaking, as the imperial representative in that territory, symbolizing imperial authority and control. The point is this: that the image had no authority of its own, any more than the vassal king of the territory, left in charge by the emperor, had such authority of his own. The only sort of authority in view, when an image appeared, was *delegated* authority.

And so it is in Genesis 1. It is as 'image of God,' and not as an *autonomous* being, that the human person is to subdue the earth and have dominion

over other creatures. It is as delegate of the one true King who is King of everything. It is as creature, and not as god, that government is to be undertaken; for the kingdom is really God's, and does not belong to its human tenants. It is not theirs to do with as they will. They are indeed only the servants of God and the stewards of his creation, accountable always and in every respect to the Owner of the Garden, the Creator; for the earth is the Lord's, as the psalmist reminds us, and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1). It does not belong to us.

V Image-Bearing

What is our human calling, therefore? It is to be a divine image-bearer in the midst of creation. What does that mean? It means to govern creation on God's behalf and as his representative; to mediate the rule of God in respect of the rest of creation; to be 'like God' in respect of the rest of creation. This involves, already in Genesis 1 and long before we get to the human turning away from God in Genesis 3, decisive action, even struggle. That is an intrinsic part of the human calling, quite apart from the question of human fallenness, which so distorts and complicates our lives.

The language of Genesis 1:28 makes this need for action, for struggle, clear; and indeed, in maintaining order and promoting life in creation in the ways envisaged here, human beings are themselves only consolidating and extending the creative acts of God in the first place—the God who himself, right at the beginning of the Bible, produces order and life out of the midst of darkness and chaos, and in opposi-

tion to their malevolent threats. The human vocation is analogous to the divine initiative, as one might expect if we are indeed made in God's image and in God's likeness. The human vocation involves the imitation of God.

Genesis 1 itself does not tell us much more, explicitly, about what the business of image-bearing involves, although it does suggest implicitly that it involves an appropriate balance between work and rest. God rests at the end of his week of creation (Genesis 2:1–3); and other parts of the OT rightly deduce that this divine example should certainly be followed by those who are made in God's likeness. To be like God involves both work and rest, in appropriate balance; and that is the great idea embedded in the Sabbath –

- the great symbol of the truth that we are not defined by what we *do*, and that life is more than work;
- great expression of the idea that life is not found in grasping after things, but in letting go of them and setting others free to do the same.

But beyond this one implication, Genesis 1 itself does not go.

We need to move out into other parts of the Bible, therefore, to fill out our picture of what image-bearing looks like. We need to move on to Genesis 2—the immediate context in which Genesis 1 must be read. Here the task of gardening, of earth-keeping, is further described, in a story that itself undermines any improper understanding of our 'ruling' the other creatures of the earth, since it emphasizes both the affinity that exists between human beings and animals (both created 'out of the ground'), and the community that is possible between them. It is at least conceivable in this story, although it turns out not to be the case, that *adam* will find a soul-mate among the other creatures.

Beyond Genesis 2 we need to take account of passages in the OT Torah or Law that extend the Genesis perspective on the human role in creation, and make very practical applications of it—passages like Leviticus 25, which tell us that it is always God who owns the land, and that we are only stewards of it and do not own it; or, making the same point in a different way, passages that give us laws pertaining to the whole created order, and not just to its human part—Deuteronomy 5:12–15, for example, which insists that animals should share in the blessing of sabbath rest, or Deuteronomy 20:19–20, expressing concern for the good of trees in the midst of warfare.

Beyond these passages, we also think of those parts of the Bible which articulate the ideals of Israelite kingship, in terms of justice and provision for all, emphasizing the protection of the most vulnerable in society; and beyond these we need to pay particular attention, of course, to the person of Jesus Christ, the divine image-bearer *par excellence* and the one whose human life we are called to imitate. Here is One who himself constantly urged his followers to live up to their calling of being 'like God', not least in this brief instruction from Matthew's Gospel: 'Be perfect … as your heavenly Father is perfect'—uttered in a context, of course, which speaks of God's goodness in creation and of God's generosity to everyone, whether they represent the forces of darkness or the forces of light.

Image-bearing is really what the

whole Bible is about, at least when the focus of attention is on human beings; and we need the whole Bible to inform us about what it entails, for it is something much too complex to be spoken of in a single biblical text or a single biblical book. It is certainly a topic far too large to be addressed comprehensively here this morning in these brief moments as we begin our day together.

But Genesis 1 at least gives us our starting point: an important grounding for our reading of the rest of the Bible, and for our understanding of the nature of Christian ministry—although I myself, although I am an ordained minister, dislike the word ministry, and try not to use it. For 'ministry' has too much religion about it; too much clericalism. It is a word that has associations too narrow and too specific, and it is difficult for us to leave them behind us when we use it. In particular, it tends to make us think of particular tasks, of particular jobs, that we might be called to *do* in the church or in the world, rather than to think of the larger question that the Bible presses on us: the question of what it is that we are called to *be*. 'Ministry' is a word that tends to cramp the imagination, and to misdirect the Christian mind, as when students tell me that they intend 'going into ministry'—which always makes me want to ask them what it is that they think they are doing at present, during every moment of every day.

VI Life

So let me ask, not about the nature of the ministry to which we are called, but rather about the nature of the *life* to which we are each called, indeed that we are *created* to live. What does

Genesis 1 tell us about life, when read with attention to its broader biblical context?

- It is a life, the text tells us, to be lived in good and true relationship with God who gives it to us.
- It is a life to be lived in good and true relationship with our fellow-human beings, who are also made equally in God's image, no matter what their gender, race or worldview may be.
- It is a life, we are further told, that is to be lived in good and true relationship with the remainder of the created order around us, for which we have a God-given responsibility.

It is a life, in sum, that is to image God in the midst of God's kingdom, which is the whole earth—to image God in multiple and various ways that reflect the beauty; the creativity; the love and compassion; the forgiveness and the justice of our Creator.

That is the picture of the human vocation that arises out of Genesis chapter 1; this is our service, our 'ministry', if you will. It is, of its very nature, fundamentally and irreducibly a holistic ministry. It is not clear how it could be anything else, when we are clearly created by God as whole people.

And it is in the context of this high human calling, which extends so far beyond the boundaries of what is normally thought of as religion, that the rest of the Bible story is to be understood. It is in the context of creation that we must comprehend the story of redemption.

What are we redeemed *from*? We are redeemed from sin: from the darkness that has entered into this world of right relationships and has produced such

catastrophic disruption, as human beings have sought to be God rather than to be the *image* of God, and in turning away from God have brought disaster on themselves, their neighbours and their environment. We are redeemed from sin.

But what are we redeemed *for*? I return to the question with which I began a little while ago. What are we redeemed *for*?

- *Not*, biblically speaking, so that we can escape culture; or unsatisfactory relationships; or ourselves;
- *not* so that we can escape from creation itself;
- and *certainly* not so that we can create our own sub-culture *within* creation, our own holy comfort-zone in which all darkness is cast to the outside and we know only cuddly communion within.

That is not redemption; it is simply a different form of sinful self-indulgence. It is simply religion. Redemption is, rather, the restoration of the divine image in human beings, and the intrinsically-connected reconstitution of the right relationships that we were created to have with God, neighbour and creation. That is what we are redeemed *for*. It is a redemption in respect of God's creation purposes for us, which are closely connected with God's purposes for us also in the *new* creation in which we are caught up in Christ. It is a redemption always focused on the larger question of God's creation purposes for all things.

- And so Noah is redeemed from the watery chaos, just as the earth had previously been *formed* out of watery chaos, so that creation can continue.

- Abraham is called out of Babylonia in response to the chaos of Babel, with a view, ultimately, to the blessing of all nations.
- The Israelites are saved from the darkness and chaos of Egypt, so that they can become a kingdom of priests to the nations, mediating God's blessing them.

VII Christ the Ultimate Image-Bearer

And so the story goes on, until it culminates in Jesus Christ. Here is the one who subdues the watery chaos of the Sea of Galilee with a simple command ('Be still'); the one who himself descends into the waters of death just as Jonah did, only to overcome the powers of darkness decisively and forever in his resurrection. Here is the one who thus makes possible the new heavens and the new earth of which the book of Revelation speaks, in which all things are redeemed—not merely human beings, but all creation which, in the words of the apostle Paul, has been groaning in anticipation of the kingdom of God coming finally and fully in God's good time, and is glad to see that day.

Here is the ultimate image-bearer, in whom our fractured images are for all time restored, and all is made well; so that in Revelation chapter 5 (verses 11–14) *every* creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, is found singing that famous song: 'to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever.' It is the New Testament version of an Old Testament vision, articulated most clearly in Psalms 148 and 150, in which 'every-

thing that has breath praises the Lord'.

What a wonderful redemption is thus envisaged! It affects everything, and it touches every part of life. What are we redeemed to be? Bearers of the divine image in every aspect of our lives. What are we redeemed to *do*? To live out that reality with integrity and joy, whatever our hand finds to do in particular instances, at particular times, and in particular places:

- whether it be worshipping and praying, or being a parent to our children, or a lover to our spouse;
- whether it be singing a psalm, or painting a portrait, or playing a sport; whether it be enjoying a wine, or farming a piece of land, or doing our duty by our employer;
- whether it be struggling for justice against the principalities and powers of this present age, or being persecuted for our faith or just actions, or rescuing a lost soul from the streets.

In all things we are called to act out the kingdom of God. And that is why holistic ministry is not one *option* among many for the Christian—something that we can take or leave as we feel led. It is not even discussable, in all honesty, as if there were some room for debate about it. Holistic ministry is simply bound up with what being a Christian is all about; for being a Christian is all about the offering of our whole selves, and the whole of our reality, as living sacrifices to the one God who made all. It is about being true to the nature of things.

May God give us all grace to embrace this expansive Good News wholeheartedly, and to preach it, so that others may know true liberation, as they find their true humanity in Christ—as they 'put on the new nature', as the apostle Paul commends it, in Ephesians chapter 4 (verses 22–24), 'created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness'. May it be so. Amen.

When Faith Turns Ugly

Brian Harris

Following the huge success of *The Tortoise Usually Wins*, 2012, and *The Big Picture*, 2015, in *When Faith Turns Ugly* Brian Harris explores why the Christian faith sometimes wears two masks – usually life-serving and transforming, but occasionally escapist, illusionary and even poisonous. What are the warning signs that faith is at risk of turning toxic? What do we mean by the conviction that the gospel liberates? Brian Harris's take on what constitutes life-serving faith is refreshing and will be appreciated by all who would like to be sure that their obedience to Jesus the Christ will help to build a world with a better name.

Brian Harris, who is the Principal of Vose Seminary and Pastor at Large for the Carey Movement in Perth, Australia, is also the author of *The Tortoise Usually Wins* (Paternoster, 2012) and *The Big Picture* (Paternoster, 2015)

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Books Reviewed

Book Reviews

Freedom of Religion or Belief: Thematic Reports of the UN Special Rapporteur, 2010-2013
Heiner Bielefeldt

Reviewed by Tony Waters, California State University, and Institute for Culture, Religion and Peace, Chiangmai, Thailand

What happens when a philosopher is thrown into the world of UN diplomacy, and its bureaucracy? This is what happened to Heiner Bielefeldt in 2010 when he was appointed to be the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Commission for Human Rights, and given the brief to report on issues of freedom of religion or belief. The position is ostensibly independent, but it is apparent from the tale told in his thematic reports that this independence exists only in the context of the nation-states who make up the United Nations. And these nation-states are not to be offended by name.

Bielefeldt's former position as a Professor of Catholic Theology and Law comes through strongly in his reports. He is well-aware of the nuances that freedom of religion and belief bring to the protection of human rights. Twice a year during his tenure, he wrote a 'special topic' brief about an important issue having to do with freedom of religion and belief. As befits a law professor and UN officer, there is ample reference to international law and international treaties dealing with human rights. Among the special topics he mentions are the

role of religion or belief and school education, the role of the state in promoting inter-religious communication, recognition of religions by the state, protection of religious minorities, and tackling the manifestations of collective religious hatred.

My favourite special topics were his discussions of the right to conversion, and the chapter on the tensions between freedom of religion and equality between men and women. Both chapters were particularly scholarly, and recognized the nuances in establishing and enforcing international law in these fields. For example, how do you reconcile religious practices that conflict with the rights of women to freely seek education, and employment? Or the right to marry freely? Under what conditions do rights to conversion conflict with the right of the state to establish a religion? These are all interesting legal questions which Bielefeldt highlights well. Left hanging though is the question of whether the UN Special Rapporteur is in any position to help states dissect the subtleties, and protect the right to freedom of religion where there is a hostility to the concept.

Thus, while Bielefeldt reports well on the status of the legal statutes, human rights conventions, and legal regimes, the 1,250 'letters of concern' the UN Special Rapporteur has sent out to 130 member nations would also be of interest. This would be of particular interest for countries where case law is important, i.e. the many countries under English Common Law. However, in this book there is no indication of what cases these letters addressed, how the cases were resolved, what the responses might have been, or which countries they were addressed to. Such I guess is the nature of diplomacy and the UN. This means that for such details, the New York *Times* is a better source than the Thematic

Reports of the UN Special Rapporteur for Religious Freedom.

I suspect the problem is that breaches in the right to religious freedoms are committed by members of the United Nations itself. Apostasy, blasphemy, and heresy can still result in the death penalty, and there are many places where houses of worship are destroyed, and people of minority faiths are attacked with impunity. Then of course there are the countries where schooling policies, recognition of religion policies, marriage and employment policies all cross the boundary into religious discrimination. And this is not even reaching into countries where messianic leaders lead revolts and wars in the name of religious faith.

So to me, the fact that in a book about freedom of religion specific abuses go unmentioned is somehow odd. Religion (and belief) in many countries is often associated closely with power, a condition that leads to religious persecution. The Special Rapporteur should, it seems, be highlighting these circumstances, hopefully with a level of subtlety which exceeds what the popular press is already doing. And judging from the abstract assessment of human rights in this book, he is capable of doing this.

So in many respects, an unintended consequence is that this book illustrates well the limitations inherent to a position such as the UN Special Rapporteur. I have no doubt that Heiner Bielefeldt is an energetic and skilled practitioner of international politics on behalf of religious freedom. And his writing about the broader issues involved indicates that he is very capable of articulating the legal statues and subtleties involved with freedom of religion or belief. Indeed, the stronger parts of the book are in his acknowledgment of how difficult it is to reconcile the right to freedom

of religion with religious beliefs about gender rights, marriage, conversion, and discrimination against women.

Indeed, in developing points about human rights, there are glimpses of Bielefeldt's skill as a philosopher and law professor. But these glimpses of philosophical and legal scholarship are hidden away in the jargon of diplomacy and legalism. Likewise, it is odd that the role that Holy Scripture plays in the origins of such freedoms is left out of the analysis.

So it seems that in the end, Bielefeldt's role as a UN diplomat trumps that of the philosopher, at least in this book. Perhaps when he departs from his role at the UN, he can again be an independent philosopher again, and cite not only UN documents and statues, but also The New York *Times*, the writings of the world's philosophers and theologians, as well as perhaps *The Bible*, *The Quran*, and *The Upanishads*.

Representing Christ: A vision for the priesthood of all believers
Uche Anizor and Hank Vos

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
Evangelical Review of Theology

This popular level book (although with a full array of footnotes and extensive bibliography) is an interesting attempt by the two authors (Anizor from Talbot School of Theology, and Vos from World Impact—both with PhDs from Wheaton College) to refocus attention onto one of the key doctrines of the Reformation. It is a welcome enterprise because the full

details and implications of this doctrine, regarded as so iconic by Protestants in particular, are not well understood and the concept is, consequently, in danger of misinterpretation and neglect to the detriment of the life of the church—and these authors add firmly, detrimental also to its mission!

Within the 150 pages of text, there is a comprehensive coverage of many aspects of the theme. The four main chapters cover the biblical data, Martin Luther's particular contribution to it, the theological framework (especially from a trinitarian perspective), and the practical outworking of the concept (all of which are effectively reiterated in the concluding chapter)

The biblical material is shown to be much more extensive than many would expect. The chapter on Luther is the most lucid and compelling, ending as it does with the observation that the Reformer 'dismantles both hierarchical and democratic visions of church life', showing not only the 'privileges' but also the 'responsibilities' of the 'vision of Christians as priests'.

Chapter 5 shows how this vision, 'representing Christ as a member of the royal priesthood', works out in practical ways, in the form of seven practices. These, first observed in the chapter on Luther, are bracketed by baptism and communion, and include prayer, Scripture reading, church discipline, ministry and proclamation.

The scope is extensive, but the text is sometimes sermonic and does not always flow smoothly or present the case with simple clarity and focus, perhaps due to its dual authorship (the workload is divided about equally between them). So many perspectives are covered that the wording is sometimes very compact, and there are few examples and illustra-

tions which would have been appropriate, given the intended readership. Nevertheless, there are plenty of substantial and suggestive insights in this presentation to break through popular stereotypes. Overall, the book would form a good basis for a study group in churches that want to work towards understanding and experiencing this important and potentially transformative doctrine.

In Defense of Doctrine: Evangelicalism, Theology, and Scripture
Rhyne R. Putman

Reviewed by Andrea L. Robinson, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, USA

In Defense of Doctrine is penned by the young scholar, Rhyne R. Putman, who currently serves as Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The monograph is the published version of his doctoral dissertation: 'Postcanonical Doctrinal Development as Hermeneutical Phenomenon', which he defended in 2012. Putman makes his ideological stance clear from the outset of the text: he is an evangelical of the Baptist tradition.

In critically evaluating his own beliefs, he asserts that 'convictions about biblical inspiration, clarity, and sufficiency', create tension with postcanonical doctrinal development (1). Putman defines doctrines as expressions of belief, and more specifically, as 'postcanonical expressions of the content of Christian belief and interpretations of Scripture

shaped by particular historical and conceptual frameworks' (27). The problem at hand concerns whether doctrinal formulations of the early church completed the process of theological development or whether further evolution is needed. The primary purpose of the book, therefore, is to make a case for the necessity of continuing doctrinal development.

With preliminary information soundly established, Putman begins developing a hermeneutical framework for his argument. Chapter 3 specifically evaluates the descriptive approach of Anthony Thiselton, and chapter 4 analyzes the normative hermeneutics of Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Subsequent chapters address three problems with doctrinal development: the locus of authority, the nature of reality depiction, and the question of continuity.

An interesting feature of the book is Putman's emphasis on imagination as an interpretive device (ch. 6). He clarifies that imagination enables interpreters to better understand biblical metaphor and respond appropriately. He relates biblical doctrine to scientific theory—both should be open to testing and revision. Putman welcomes the dialogue between a diversity of theological traditions so that interpreters may draw ever nearer to the best meaning of biblical texts. The book concludes with an apology for hermeneutical theory as the primary tool for establishing faithful doctrine.

In Defense of Doctrine is an erudite contribution to the fields of hermeneutics and theology. The book is well organized and clearly written, and Putman's heartfelt polemic for ongoing doctrinal development is concisely presented. However, the audience of the book will probably not go far beyond academia. Putman's text is thoroughly researched and draws from a variety of disciplines. Insights

from the philosophy of language, the philosophy of science, and epistemology complement the hermeneutical and theological analyses. Even readers from the field of biblical studies will find that the book requires concentration and thoughtful study. Putman's text is not suitable for a quick perusal.

Several noteworthy features of the book bear mention. First, Putman shows great concern for reaching the unchurched. Although the text is highly academic, the material is not simply an ivory tower abstraction. Putman presents a strong case for biblical scholars to translate theology into practical doctrine that can be appropriated by cultures around the world. Second, Putman distils and evaluates the views of numerous scholars for his readers. He examines the work of Thiselton and Vanhoozer in great detail, but he also gives attention to other noteworthy scholars, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, Paul Ricoeur, and many others.

Third, Putman's explication of speech-act theory is exceptional. He capably explicates the profound implications that linguistic studies have had on the field of hermeneutics. Fourth, Putman's interdisciplinary approach is refreshing. He aptly models how biblical scholarship can constructively interact with other branches of the humanities as well as the sciences.

In short, Putman convincingly argues that evangelicals can maintain the authority, inerrancy, and efficacy of scripture while translating eternal truths for new contexts and peoples.

Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice
Marvin J. Newell
Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2016
ISBN 978-0-8308-4473-9
Pb., pp 298, appendices, bibliog., index

Reviewed by David Turnbull, Senior Lecturer in Intercultural Studies, Tabor College of Higher Education, South Australia.

Living in a globalized world means seeing the rise of polycentric mission, from everywhere to everywhere. As God's community moves to and from places, cultural chasms need to be crossed. The mechanics of bridge building to facilitate movement inevitably draws on principles and practices primarily from secular and social sciences perspectives. Marvin Newell, in his book *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice,* adds to this bank of literature by addressing significant principles and practices for bridge building that arise from Scripture. Such a book on intercultural effectiveness drawing on Scripture is long overdue.

Newell comes with a background of two decades of missional engagement in East and Southeast Asia and more years in Intercultural Studies education. This background aids his credibility in sharing on the subject and leads to a conversational and personable style of presentation.

Newell takes on a unique approach to explore the principles and practices of cross-cultural engagement from Scripture. He remains loyal to the journey of Scripture through retelling and evaluating, from a cross-cultural perspective,

35 significant biblical characters, events and texts from Genesis to Revelation. For each account, there is a personal narrative, a core text, core insights and a relevant summary of the implications for crossing cultural chasms to take away. These encounters are applied to the diversity of contexts where crossing the cultural chasm can occur today such as cross-cultural workers heading into a different geographical context, being an international student, welcoming international students, and engaging the diaspora on our doorstep. The principles and practices arising from the selected Scriptures cover a range of subjects impacting on cross-cultural engagement such as addressing common cultural differences like shame and honour, cross-cultural truth seekers (such as the Queen of Sheba), and possible approaches to common scenarios that arise in relational cross-cultural encounters.

Numerous conceptual strengths are evident from Newell's Scriptural story-telling approach to developing cultural intelligence. The deliberate focus on Scripture recognizes its authority and value in educating God's people and the selection of encounters brings a sense of comprehensiveness and breadth for what is sought in crossing cultures, even though several key encounters are missing such as that with Melchizedek. I was particularly struck by the way he has appropriately engaged cross-cultural encounters, not just from the 'perceived' cross-cultural worker's perspective but also from the perspectives of those people and communities from the different cultures encountering God's messengers (such as Ruth, Rahab, and the Queen of Sheba). Developing knowledge of how the 'other' perceives what is occurring will certainly aid strategy, planning and delivery within cross-cultural encounters. Five useful takeaways are the balanced dissection of Jonah's ethnocentrism (130), the cross-cultural seeker cycle (114), Nehemiah's response to the seven forms of hostility by dominant majority culture communities (160ff), Jesus' seven marks of cross-cultural success (pp.186ff) and the cultural interpretation of Paul's treatise on love from 1 Corinthians 13 (252-3).

When using the book the reader needs to recognize that the flow of ideas regarding the cross-cultural encounter is not sequential or logical, and that the aim and purpose is to focus on Scripture, not the principles and practices. Each passage needs to be treated individually. In using the book some common missiological language in intercultural studies is missing such as incarnational living and identification. Possessing an overarching secular framework like cultural competence or cultural intelligence will be helpful to guide people through the experiences and help organize the dynamics in a more systematic manner. The topical guide on page 8 helps address this concern.

Having said this, the result is still an admirable resource to encourage those who seek to develop cultural intelligence in bridge building. From reading the book you realize the extent of the cross-cultural engagement God's people participated in in the Biblical period, which shows the significance for our contemporary multi-cultural world. The book has potential to be used as a textbook globally and for all cultural settings but certainly as a strategic reference book to aid the missional and cultural dimensions to be incorporated in the preaching and teaching of Scripture.

The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom
Lee Beach

Reviewed by Yoon Ki Kim, PhD Candidate in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, United States.

Lee Beach is an assistant professor of Christian ministry and director of ministry formation at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. His current research interests are themes such as 'emerging Christianity' and 'exilic spirituality' in Canada and North America. The main thesis of his recent book *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom* is comprehending the theme of 'exile' as 'an appropriate motif for the western church's understanding of itself and its mission in its current setting.'

Beach argues throughout the book that 'a robust biblical and practical theology rooted in both the Old Testament and New Testament visions of exile' can be an insightful guide to the contemporary church in the west. The goal of the book is then the contribution 'to the necessary and ongoing conversation around the church's identity in changing times', where the church is being pushed out to the margins and taking on a 'more peripheral role' in the post-Christendom society of the west. Though Beach's analysis of the church is limited to the Canadian and North American context, the reader is not limited to it since its biblical, theological, and sociological implications are prophetic and exten-

sive, likely to transform the imagination of the readers regardless of their geographical location.

Is it not true that when a person experiences something entirely disparate to this world, i.e. the revelation in Jesus Christ, that the person will obtain an exilic spirit in one way or another? In that sense, Beach is right when he asserts that the state of exile is a 'cultural and spiritual condition', and that this lifestyle away from home is 'at the heart of Christian faith'. By looking into the diasporic advice tales—the book of Esther, Daniel, and Jonah—he provides the readers with a revised understanding of 'who we are and who God is in our current experience as the church in the Western world'.

Moreover, he connects the motif of exile shared in Second Temple Jews and early Christians with the Christians living in the western society today because they share 'a sense of social or political marginalization, eschatological hope, and identity as the true people of God.' What then is the prophetic role of the church in the west? For Beach, it is acknowledging in a humble manner the distance from where we live to our true eschatological home, but at the same time, offering hope as the resource that invigorates the people of exile as they continue on with their pilgrimage.

In a broader perspective the Protestant spirit has given birth to a long line of prophetic reformers, theologians, and church leaders. But along with this phenomenon, Christianity and the church have been suffering a chronic disease: tuning out these prescient voices by treating them with silent contempt. It reminds the readers of how shortly after Jesus claimed that no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown, the people in the synagogue got up, drove

him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill to hurl him off the cliff—a depiction that best describes how Christianity has been forever rebuffing its exilic identity. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ passed through the midst of them and went his way.

This prophetic presence in the margins is the church's hope; his holiness and nonconformity is the church's lens of peculiarity and discernment; his ongoing mission in the world shows that God has no intention of abandoning the church in exile. Thus, the exilic motif emphasized in this book is of great importance for Christianity in the twenty first century, which calls for receptivity and a responsive theology deeply rooted in biblical texts and ecclesial praxis.

Postliberal Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed
Ronald T. Michener

Reviewed by Michael Borowski, Review-Editor of Evangelical Review of Theology.

For Evangelicals, postliberal theology (plt) has become an area of interest in the last decades—and this for good reason. For instance, plt has been referred to as a way 'back to the Bible (almost)' by Roger Olsen, and this already in 1996. Since then, there seems to be a somewhat increasing interest in this topic, to which the series, 'A Guide for the Perplexed', by T&T Clark has dedicated this particular volume to.

Ronald T. Michener starts out by providing a very concise introduction to plt.

In order to define a complex movement, he characterizes plt step by step as non-foundationalist, intra-textual, socially centred, being in respect of diversity, and generous in its orthodoxy. He also locates plt within Hans Frei's five 'types' of theology as the one that is related to the thought of Karl Barth.

In his second chapter, Michener presents the background of plt both from a wider and a specific theological angle, summarizing writers such as Wittgenstein, Alasdair MacIntyre, Thomas Kuhn, Clifford Geertz and others. On the theological angle, he covers Augustine, Aquinas and Barth.

In chapter 3, the author engages the particular exponents of plt such as Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, with Stanley Hauerwas as the cornerstone of plt. Then he deals with the contributions of David Kelsey, William Placher, Bruce D. Marshall, George Hunsinger, Kathryn Tanner and others in a chapter that is rather specific about the particular issues related to the most important proponents of plt. While only brief, this coverage should enable the readers to engage in further study later.

Michener's fourth chapter is dedicated to problems and criticism of postliberalism. Michener addresses in particular the question of truth. Starting with the somewhat common accusation that plt promotes relativism, Michener discusses 'how truth is obtained and what we promote and define as truth' (96). Michener secondly addresses the critique that plt would abandon apologetics by arguing that plt does not abandon apologetics entirely, but 'a certain brand of rationalistic apologetics, in favor of an ad hoc approach to demonstrate the viability of the Christian faith' (98). Thirdly, the ability of plt to relate to culture and the public sphere is challenged at times.

Michener dismisses this claim, for instance by referring to Mike Higton's massive work on Hans Frei as a public theologian.

In the final chapter, Michener addresses prospects and proposals for plt today. He commends plt for overcoming the modernistic dualism of 'head and heart', which would include a renewed emphasis of affections and liturgical practice also for theology. Michener concludes that while plt might be evaluated differently by other theologians (as it always is), plt to him would seem to be a valid way to retrieve, repair and renew theol-ogy. Michener closes with suggestions for further readings, providing an organized overview on primary and further sources.

This conclusion, then, is the perfect climax of a near perfect book. In my judgment, Michener has addressed all relevant areas in a highly readable and clearly structured fashion. His book will be of great support for those who are perplexed by a complex, yet very important movement, and it comes with the benefit of being written from an evangelical angle.

Stephen T Davis, *Rational Faith: a philosopher's defense of Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016) ISBN 978-0-8308-4474-6 Pb, pp190

This small (160 pages of text) but closely argued book on apologetics is aimed mainly at Christian college students worried about certain intellectual challenges to traditional Christian faith. In 10 chapters (9 plus the conclusion which is in fact a substantive chapter in itself), the author covers such topics as objective truth, faith and belief in God, evolution, science and religion, the authenticity of the Bible, the uniqueness of Christianity and evil (the least satisfactory chapter).

As befits a philosopher, the argumentation is measured and clear (in many places it will take very careful reading); the author takes care to frame the issues under discussion precisely, and does not draw unwarranted conclusions. The treatment is concise and compact (but there are many references to the author's larger works for more details).

Typically Davis does not restrict his evidence or reasoning to purely philosophical matters, but integrates biblical and theological considerations into the discussion, as required. He also makes his own personal position as a committed evangelical clear without compromising the evidence or his intellectual integrity, especially on matters which may be complex, indecisive or contentious. In fact, declaring his personal views makes his case much more attractive.

Overall, this highly commendable apologetic 'taster' should effectively meet the needs of readers in the contemporary western culture, and in the process, show clearly the value of disciplined but devout thought and argumentation. As such it deserves wider circulation than the intended audience.

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor, *Evangelical Review of Theology*