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Perspectives on the Church in the 21st Century

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The Church's Mission in the World: The Realities of Contextualization

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Mission Statement
An Online, Open-Access, International Journal

Common Ground Journal (*CGJ*) is a publication of the CanDoSpirit Network and is published twice annually as a resource for Christian congregations seeking to understand and faithfully live out their calling as the people of God in the world. The primary audience for CGJ is thoughtful Christians in congregations who are catalysts for growth within their own churches.

CGJ is devoted to the development of strong, faithful churches whose life and ministry grow out of the church's nature as the people of God. They are organized and led in a manner consistent with their nature and mission. They continually ask, "What does it mean to be a sign of the Kingdom of God in the world today?"

CGJ is a resource for congregational development. We invite scholars and thoughtful Christians in congregations around the world to stimulate inquiry, reflection and action around issues central to the life and ministry of the gathered community of faith. We invite those who serve as leaders in congregations, mission agencies, parachurch organizations, relief and development work, higher education, and non-traditional leadership development to apply their scholarship and expertise in these fields to the context of the local church. We encourage members of congregations to address the broader church with insights grounded in a thoughtful examination of Scripture, and in their own experiences as part of communities of faith in the world.

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Common Ground Journal seeks to stimulate Christian Churches to thoughtful action around their calling to be the people of God in the world. All articles should be grounded both in theology and the life of the church. Writers are encouraged to write to and about their own cultures and contexts. CGJ invites submissions in the following categories:

- Articles that stimulate thinking and reflection on the nature of the Church

- Articles that link the nature of the Church to its life and work in the world

- Articles that explore the integration of theology and social sciences in relation to life and work of the Church

- Essays on truths gleaned from the interplay of theory and practice, theology and experience in the active life of faith

- Articles that present insights from congregations attempting to live out their identity as the people of God in world

- Articles based on responsible qualitative research designed to inform a local congregation's understanding of its life and ministry

- Articles that raise questions that the Christian community needs to explore in becoming the people of God in the world

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From the Editor

By Marlene Enns

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From the Editor: The Church's Mission in the World – Realities of Contextualization

The Andean anthropologist, Tito Paredes defines contextualization as follows:

> By this term we understand the possibility and capability of Christians in a determined context to make the gospel feel at home in the cultures where people live and communicate God's Word; but at the same time, to take into account that the gospel will always be a pilgrim in every culture since it will confront the sinful and opposing elements in it. (2007, 334)

"To make the gospel feel at home" is no longer just the mission of those who go "abroad." Ever since the world has become a global village, this is the challenge of all Christians who want to make Jesus Christ known to their children, neighbors, and colleagues. Kathleen Macosko shares with us the story of what this meant for the Stadium Village Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is interesting to note that at the end of the story she acknowledges that what happened at their church would not have been possible unless God's people were willing to make sacrifices and change sinful attitudes.

Chris Shaw, who lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina and travels throughout Latin America, continues where Kathleen left off. In fact, he emphasizes that, "it is tempting to think that the challenge of contextualizing the gospel is only a matter of applying the right strategy to the ministries we have been entrusted with." He reminds us through the example of Jesus Christ, that contextualization is a "matter of the heart."

Now, what about Muslims? How is it possible to communicate God's Word to people who belong to Islam, a religion which raises red flags for so many? How to make the Word of God "feel at home" for them in a way such, that it would bring about faith/obedience to Isa (Jesus)? Johannes Reimer (Germany) suggests that some religious

key words and names which are used in the Qur'an also be used in the translations of the Bible for Muslims.

Not only is it important to contextualize the language of the Bible and develop local theologies. Contextualization needs to be comprehensive and include "local expressions of the whole of our faith as seen through the myths, ethics, social organizations and leadership, rituals, experiences of God and the material expressions we develop" (Moreau 2006, 334). To this effect, an article follows, in which Marcus Dean (former missionary in Colombia and Puerto Rico) makes helpful suggestions about contextualizing leadership.

As we continue our journey through this issue on contextualization we arrive at a section where authors are struggling with worldview subjects. Here we are facing matters of epistemology, ontology and axiology. Here we are facing the reality that there is not only one valid system of logic. In fact, in his book, Transforming Worldviews, Hiebert lists five systems: abstract/analytical logic (usually favored by the West), analogical/fuzzy logic, topological logic, relational logic, and evaluative logic or wisdom (2008, 39-45). He adds, that "although people use different logics in different contexts, one or another of these is seen as foundational and given more credence" (2008, 39). This happens in most noticeable ways "particularly at the level of formal analysis conducted by religious, philosophical and scientific experts" (2008, 44), and explains why Western theology has had a privileged position among Christians in the world. Hence, Hiebert suggests that if we truly are searching for a meta-theology and for a more comprehensive understanding of the biblical message, then it is necessary that we recognize—as scientists also do—that in fact "rationality is a many-splendored thing" (1999, 87).

The articles written by Faustin *Ntamushobora* (Rwanda), Moonjang Lee (originally from South Korea), and Marlene Enns (Paraguay) deal with some of the just mentioned worldview issues. Ntamushobora proposes that an African theology which can be an equal dialog partner with the rest of Christendom needs to find appropriate theological starting points, and consider *proverbs, riddles, poetry, etc., as valid sources and means of knowing, teaching and learning. Lee proposes that an Asian theology requires an epistemology which goes beyond the compartmentalization caused by positivism, which is able to keep knowledge and practice in harmony, and which is done in the life-situations of the people. Hence, he suggests that theology needs to be spiritual,*

missiological, and non-dualistic. Enns analyzes what it implied for Jesus to make God and himself known in light of John 17 and cultural variations of reasoning. She suggests that contextualization is about knowing and making known God and Jesus Christ in broader and more holistic categories than we sometimes are used to.

We end this volume of the CGJ with a review on John H. Morgan's book The New Paradigm in Ministry Education (2008) written by Dr. Bernard J. O'Connor. Morgan, too, offers an alternative vision: an alternative educational vision, which is based upon "a radical philosophy of collaboration." It is to end the imperialistic subjugation which students experience within the school system, and to enhance true learning.

As we interact with the contributing authors on the subject of contextualization, may we prayerfully and thoughtfully seek how best we can be faithful to our calling, for

Contextualization that is faithful to the gospel, to history, to the world and to its varieties of peoples, ethnic groups, and languages "does not conform to the tendencies (gr. aion) of society." Every contextualization of mission requires the renovation of the mind for a true transformation. (Arroyo Bahamonde 2007, 246)

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About the Editor

Marlene Enns is a faculty on one of the campuses of the Facultad de Teología de la Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay. Since 1994 she is also part of the international faculty team of Haggai Institute (Singapore/Maui) teaching women leaders from the Two Thirds world in the area of evangelism.

The Story of Stadium Village Church: The Journey from China to Ruling Elder

By Kathleen Macosko

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The following true story is a glimpse of the 60 member Stadium Village Church (SVC), where we partner with God and other International Student Ministries to be a *Worshipping, Teaching, Serving, Sending, International Community at the University of Minnesota that proclaims Jesus as Lord.*

Sweet spirited and studious Wei Hou came from China in 2001 to study in the Aerospace Engineering and Mechanics Department at the University of Minnesota. Her husband, who worked at the Chinese Aviation Administration, finally received a U.S. visa to join her 10 months later. As he waited for acceptance in her same program at the "U", he attended several of the more than 15 English conversation classes offered daily as an outreach of SVC. His name, Zhijiang, was difficult to pronounce so one teacher suggested the name Jeremy. He liked the meaning *The Lord Exalts,* even though he wasn't a Christian and was sure that there were no official Christians in China!

All of his volunteer English teachers at SVC who came from various churches, were Christians and were not ashamed of the Gospel. If asked, they answered about their faith and about Christian holiday meanings. Some classes were actual Bible studies either topical or book studies or they used the *Jesus* video (Campus Crusade for Christ's Jesus Film Project). For the first time, he read and questioned the Bible. He liked the newspaper/current event classes, the Comics, Culture and Conversation classes and the Public Speaking Club (based on Toastmasters). Teachers invited him to their home. He went on several sightseeing trips both in town and overnight to stay with farm families and to tour Duluth.

Jeremy's ESL teacher invited him to attend the Friday evening Alpha Course that is begun most Januarys at SVC. He was more eager to attend something about the Christian faith than his wife. Alpha dinners were served by small groups from other churches and their conversations at the tables interested him. A few weeks later, Wei

hesitantly came. As they listened to the various professors' and professionals' talks about aspects of the Christian faith they became more interested in exploring the claims of Jesus. When the course ended, one church couple invited Wei and Jeremy to their home for a 3-month Bible study with students from their Alpha small group, where they felt comfortable asking questions about Christian beliefs.

It was sometime during that Alpha Course that they began to attend church. Worship was comfortable for them because 60% of the 100 worshippers were international students (20% were American students). Sitting in the couches at the back made it easier to be with their young daughter after she had arrived from China. They enjoyed fellowship at the weekly potlucks or soup lunches following every worship time. At our 9 am breakfasts, Wei could be seen putting the cold hard boiled egg into her tea to warm it for her daughter.

We wanted to form a Chinese language education hour class. (We don't call it Sunday School, nor do we use much "Christianese" in our worship.) Wei declined because she said they prefer to study the Bible in English. She also indicated that although she likes the band made up of 10 multi-ethnic students, she expected organ and 'classical' songs. Of course, on the Sunday that the 14 Chinese members and 15 attendees planned the whole worship service she requested her special music. She appreciates the multi-language songs we sing on a regular basis, and the power point images and sermon notes. And she realizes now that our new Bible class in Chinese helps faith to go deeper.

Finally, both husband and wife, and the whole small study group decided to be baptized. The day after the baptism Wei was to return to China to bring back her 3-year old daughter whom she hadn't seen for 19 months. As she was preparing her testimony to read before the congregation, she wondered if it was fair that God should accept her after all the years she had ignored him. Suddenly she realized that this was exactly the situation she found herself in with her daughter. Would her daughter accept her after nearly 2 years of separation? It all became clear to her. Spiritually she fell into the Lord's arms as her little daughter would eventually fall into hers.

U.S. visa problems prevented her from returning to her studies for a semester, but that time in China gave her a chance to get to know her daughter again, to study and grow

closer to God and to witness to her parents and friends about her new faith. She returned a mature believer, far beyond expectations for her 4-month old faith.

A few months later she was asked to become our first Chinese elder. (Our session of 6 is 2/3 Asian born: 1 each from China, Taiwan, Korean, Singapore, and 2 from America.) Before her tenure ended 2 other Chinese joined her. She was able to coach them about English ecclesiastical terms and procedures. We tried to keep her commitments light, since it wasn't easy to be an elder and a PhD candidate. But we rejoiced with her at our Labor Day Research Fair, during the Education Hour, when she and other students, shared their research projects with the church.

Like many Chinese PhD students, Jeremy and Wei have chosen to remain in the U.S. They just bought their first home and will ease into home maintenance, as they use the skills they have learned at SVC's Work Days and as a Trustee—for Jeremy is serving in that capacity.

Some of their Chinese church friends have graduated and moved around the U.S. but the visiting scholars and professors have gone back to China. How appropriate that they can take with them a 'faith souvenir' not only of a New Living Translation Life Application Study Bible, but a knowledge of who Jesus is! This is effective stewardship, for they know the language and culture as they share in their home countries about the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In the past 5 years, Stadium Village Church has been transformed into an international church with a growth of 225%. We are 29 Asian, 2 Europeans, 1 African and 3 bi-cultural members to complement the 29 Caucasian Americans (5 of whom are missionaries out of the area). The members know our focus: *Making Disciples who will Make Disciples.* They are willing to sacrifice the '*what does this church have for me*' and the '*we've never done it that way before'* attitudes in order to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the students God sends to us.

About the Author

Kathleen Macosko is a Stated Supply Pastor of Stadium Village Church in Minneapolis, MN.

A Matter of the Heart

By Chris Shaw

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It is tempting to think that the challenge of contextualizing the gospel is only a matter of applying the right strategy to the ministries we have been entrusted with. The reasons we keep other people's cultures at arm's length, however, would seem to be much deeper than anything that can be resolved by a change of tactics. This article explores this issue.

Extensive travels to minister in a wide variety of settings throughout Latin America have often exposed me to the narrow, unbending mindset that is very much a part of many of the congregations in this continent. Outsiders not only have the feeling that they do not belong to the peculiar evangelical subculture, but often come away with the distinct impression that they are not welcome in many of these churches.

Peter´s Blunder

The growing sense that something is seriously wrong with the way we understand the Truth led me some years back to return to the gospels. My desire was to gain a fresh perspective of the way Jesus went about ministry. As I walked through the gospel stories I came to a startling realization: many of the people who came into contact with Jesus not only questioned his principles, but also attempted to convert him to their own perspectives.

Peter provides us with the clearest example of this human tendency. At the height of his popularity Jesus decided the time was ripe to broach the subject of his identity and asked the Twelve what people thought about him. The disciples reported that there was some confusion in the popular notion as to who he actually might be (Mt 16:14). When he asked the disciples who *they* thought he might be, Peter unhesitatingly declared: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16).

Peter´s confession, we understand, is the foundation to any meaningful spiritual experience. His statement moved the Lord to call him "blessed." In declaring that Jesus was the Christ, then, Peter was right on target as to the identity of the Son of God, though

the Lord confirmed that such knowledge was not the result of carefully reasoned logic, but rather a gift from the Father in heaven.

Jesus immediately built on this confession by adding new details as to what being the Messiah actually meant. He began to "explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Mt 16: 21).

This shocking revelation was not well received by the disciples, least of all by Peter. Taking him aside the disciple began to rebuke the Lord, something that was completely out of line with the confession he had just made. This reaction clearly reveals that when Peter identified Jesus as the *Christ* he had a completely different figure in mind from the one the Father had in mind. The fact that he rebuked Jesus shows how unwilling he was to discard the "notion of Christ" he possessed for the real Christ who stood before him. Rather than abandon the traditional Jewish image of the Messiah that he had inherited from his culture he attempted to pressure Jesus into becoming the Messiah he had always dreamed of.

A Worrying Tendency

Peter does not stand alone in this inclination to reform the Lord. The gospels contain many other examples of situations where those around Jesus attempted to pressure him into being different from what he was. When Jesus visited Nazareth and entered the synagogue, for example, those present were filled with wonder at the wisdom of his teaching. When he spoke directly to their hardened hearts, however, the very same people seized him and "and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff" (Lk 4:29). The message was clear: "we want a Jesus who speaks to us the words we want to hear." In the same way, when the disciples found Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman at the well, they were confused. Their Jewish image of the Messiah had no room for someone who spoke to women, even less so if she belonged to the despised Samaritan nation. They reacted in the same way to people who attempted to bring children to the Lord for his blessing. Likewise, the Pharisees continually censored the Lord because he chose to mix with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes (Mk 2:16). The behavior of Jesus was so far removed from their sanitized version of a Messiah that they couldn't possibly find a single redeeming quality in him.

When Jesus slept in the storm Peter again rebuked Jesus. His spirituality could not understand a "god" who apparently showed no care for them in the midst of their trials. Martha also vented her annoyance toward the Lord when he seemed to endorse what she considered Mary's lazy attitudes. In the last supper Peter argued with Jesus over his decision to wash the disciple's feet. He simply could not get his mind around the concept of a Messiah who performed the tasks of a slave! Even when Jesus patiently explained to him that this was necessary, Peter would not give up on his attempts to get Jesus to do things the way he would have done them himself. After Jesus' rebuke, Peter said, "If you need to wash me, you might as well go ahead and wash my hands and feet as well" (Jn 13:9).

These scenes from the gospels clearly indicate the existence of a human tendency—the need to control those around us so that they become what we want them to be. Many other scenes from Scripture bring to light this same inclination, so that it may safely be concluded that this is something inherent to human nature. The inclination to mold others is so ingrained that not even God is free from our attempts at reform.

Promoting Culture Instead of Truth

How does this tendency interfere with our efforts to serve others through the ministries to which we have been called? A story from the early years in my pastoral experience clearly illustrates the kind of problems we may cause if this inclination is not checked. A friend and I had started a congregation in one of the large slums of Buenos Aires. The people we were working with were desperately poor and we had a burden to bring them the hope of the gospel in the midst of their daily struggle to survive. Soon our efforts were rewarded and a number of families made decisions for Christ. We visited them several times a week and initiated the process of helping them become disciples of Christ. Along the way we scrounged materials from a local car manufacturing plant and helped them build houses to replace their precarious shacks. Wherever we went, however, the oppressive nature of their poverty always weighed heavily on our hearts.

One day my wife and I were moved to take two small children to our home for the weekend. Their mother was a prostitute and they were often alone when we visited the slum, so we thought this would be a special treat for them. For two unbelievable days they enjoyed hot baths, warm beds, clean clothes and delicious meals. On Sunday

evening when I took them home on the bus it was pouring. When we got off I had to negotiate the six unpaved blocks back to their house while trying to carry the two of them and balance my umbrella. By the time we got back they were once again covered in mud, their clean clothes soaked through with water. I couldn't avoid feeling that we had not even dented their misery-filled existence!

It was many years later, however, that I understood that the special weekend we planned for these children had probably caused more harm than good. We had taken them from their own world and inserted them into our own comfort-filled existence. When that experience was over they had to return to the same dreary world they had lived in all their lives. Now, however, their suffering was compounded by the fact that they had been offered a glimpse of a world previously unknown, one which would always be inaccessible to them. No matter what improvements they could experience in the slum, they would never come remotely close to the world we lived in. The seed of dissatisfaction and bitterness may have been sown by our good, but misguided, intentions.

In almost thirty years of ministry experience I have observed that the Christian church tends to walk down this road again and again. We want people to come to us instead of our going to them. As soon as they become Christians we expect them to cut off their relationships with as many of their former contacts as possible. The resulting isolation so exposes them to the evangelical culture that they soon become unable to relate to people outside that evangelical culture. They, too, will now expect anyone interested in knowing the Truth to step outside their world and enter into the safe, hygienic environment of a typical congregation in Latin America.

Should we be surprised that so few people are really being transformed into true disciples of Jesus through this model? Most of the time, we are simply substituting one culture for another. A change of culture, however, has no significant impact on the kind of lives that people lead. This may be one of the main reasons that the church in Latin America has failed to make much of an impact on society, despite unbelievable growth in the size of the church over the last forty years.

The Path of Incarnation

A return to the gospels has afforded me invaluable insights into the path followed by Jesus in bringing the Good News to the world. When Jesus reached the end of his earthly ministry he told his disciples: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn 20.22). We do well, then, to attempt to understand in what particular way Jesus was sent, that we might discover some of the same principles that could help us as the Father sends us to bring the Good News of Christ to others.

Perhaps the best description of the way in which Jesus came to us is offered in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. The first eleven verses of that passage not only afford us a unique perspective of the mission undertaken by the Son of Man, but also point to the ways in which those principles can be carried over into our own spiritual experience.

Developing an Attitude (vs. 5)

In the opening paragraph of this article I suggested that developing a culturally relevant ministry is not simply a matter of strategy. Perhaps the greatest single obstacle to reaching out to others is the existence of the wrong kind of attitude on our part. We most often stumble in our attempts to touch the lives of others because we come to them feeling that we are better than they are, or only showing enough interest to enable us to share the "good news" with them. These others, however, quickly see through our ill-disguised intentions. Like Peter with Cornelius, we need to be converted to God's perspectives before we can effectively touch the lives of those around us (Acts 10).

One of the most startling characteristics in the life of Jesus is how much sinners enjoyed being with him. He joined their festivities and often visited their homes, much to the dismay of the religious authorities of the time. They labeled him "friend of sinners"—a description that is rarely applied to the people of God today. Many of us are the product of a Christian culture which believes that spiritual maturity is best achieved by isolating ourselves from the world of "sinners."

Why did these people flock to Jesus? They knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that he loved them! No matter how undignified, perverse or wicked they were, Jesus genuinely loved them. It did not bother him that a prostitute could kiss his feet; because

he saw her through eyes of compassion, and compassion is the visible manifestation of a heart filled with love.

The clearest image of the Lord's love-filled heart is given to us through the parable of prodigal son. The father, who showers him with kisses, passionately receives the filthy, smelly, destitute younger son home. We can understand the elder brother's indignation, because we have so often limited the gospel to those we consider worthy of our service. Yet Christ is lavishly generous in loving all with undiminished passion, a love that often comes close to being scandalous.

Paul exhorts the Philippian Christians to do everything possible to keep the unity of the body. Even when the apostle is specifically referring to the church, there is a way of looking at the world where we never forget that we have been saved *by grace.* It is the very fact that we are completely undeserving of the Lord's mercy that can keep us from looking at others as if they were inferior to ourselves. We can come to them in a spirit of warm generosity because this is the way the Lord has come to us.

Setting Aside Privileges (vs. 6)

Paul writes of Christ that "although he existed in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." The term "grasp" offers a graphic illustration of one of the major hurdles to overcome in the process of reaching out to others: the laying aside of our own comforts and rights. In fact, he clearly exhorts the Philippians to do nothing out of selfishness. When we consider what is involved in the action of *grasping* it becomes clear that the process of emptying oneself cannot be undertaken without a certain degree of struggle. We do not easily lay aside those things that are most precious to ourselves.

It is at this point that many of us stumble. We *do* want others to be touched by the gospel; we just don't want that process to bring too much upheaval to our orderly and predictable existence. The classic image of the foreign missionary who continues to live as he/she did in his own home country comes to mind. What is called for, however, is the kind of commitment where we are willing to lay aside all the comforts and privileges we currently enjoy to become fully identified with the world and culture we are hoping to reach.

The birth of Christ in a small, dingy and smelly manger, alone and unwelcomed is just as it should be. The Father signaled to the world that his Son would take on the whole fragile, human condition and begin with no privileges whatsoever. As Jesus walked the dusty roads he was subject to the same heat and fatigue that others endured. He had no place to rest his head and was as exposed to thieves and robbers as any inhabitant of the ancient Near East.

In the course of my involvement in leadership development, I was privileged to participate in a missionary training centre in Brazil. The vision for this particular organization was that missionaries would establish churches among the urban poor. Those who were recruited for this enormous undertaking were not allowed to go the traditional route for this type of mission. Rather, they were required to live in the great slums where they were working. Their support level was consistent with the salary level of the people in these slums. In taking on the identity of a slum dweller they hoped to be more effective in making the gospel message visible to those they wanted to reach.

Taking on Another Form (vs. 7)

Why was it necessary for Christ to "take on the form of a bond-servant, and to be made in the likeness of men?" The answer is quite simple: we cannot understand something unless it is presented to us in a language and format with which we are familiar. The summary of Christ's effect on the Twelve is to be found in John's testimony: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we *saw* his glory . . . full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Additional details are supplied for us in his first epistle: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands . . ." (1Jn 1:1). The life of Christ had a dramatic impact on the lives of the disciples because they were able to see a relationship to the Father lived out in the context of an ordinary life. They walked with the Truth, hugged the Truth, laughed with the Truth and talked with the Truth. They were able to argue with the Truth, consult the Truth and differ with the Truth. Along the way an unbelievable process of transformation began to take place in their lives.

As we work among leaders in Latin America we have often been asked why we don't relocate in Miami. The move, which makes sense from a logistical and financial perspective, would cut us off from the very people we are trying to assist. We believe that

our effectiveness with pastors in this region is greatly increased if we choose to live in the same environment they live in; even though this means we often struggle with corruption, violence, dishonesty and plain inefficiency. When we draw alongside pastors, they are more disposed to fellowship with us because we live in the same world.

Embracing Humility (vs. 8)

Paul encourages the Philippians to "regard others as more important than yourselves." It should be noted that he does not state that others *are* more important than ourselves, but rather that we should extend them that courtesy. There are no cultures better than others, though we all tend to believe our own culture is superior. The truth, however, is that cultures are simply different; every one has its strengths and weaknesses. Yet to hold onto our familiar ways naturally drives us to press others to conform to our own personal culture.

An interesting detail in the description Paul offers us in Philippians is that Christ "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." I find this verse intriguing because, in my experience, we so often devote our energies to humbling others, not ourselves. Yet humility, rightly understood, is a discipline we impose on our own unruly spirits, rather than looking for ways to get others to behave as we would like them to.

As we seek to make the gospel culturally relevant, we come to others as fellow pilgrims in life; willing to embrace the values and forms that are appropriate in another culture in order to communicate our unconditional love to others. This way of doing missions is perhaps best illustrated by the decision Hudson Taylor took to adopt many of the Chinese customs when he arrived in that land, much to the ridicule of the established missionaries who lived safely in their compounds.

We need to allow each culture to identify the ways that are most appropriate for the gospel to be proclaimed, allowing the people in the culture to inform and instruct us in this direction. We cannot, therefore, hold too tightly to any particular method or style. What has worked well in one context may have adverse results in a different context. Those who have an open and teachable spirit will quickly find new ways to make the gospel relevant to the people among whom they minister; and, in turn, the people will minister to them.

About the Author

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Islamismen in der Bibelübersetzung

By Johannes Reimer

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Abstrakt: Man kann die Effektivität der Bibelübersetzung an der Effektivität der Glaubensvermittlung messen. Bibelübersetzung in Sprachen von Völkern die dem Islam anhängen, führen jedoch oft zu intensiver Ablehnung des christlichen Glaubens. Eine der Ursachen dieser Reaktion ist der Gebrauch von einer islamfremden „christlichen" Sprache. Historisch-sprachliche Untersuchungen deuten an, dass man den biblischen Einfluss auf die Entstehung des qur´anischen Textes nicht übersehen darf, und daß der Qur´an nicht so anti-christlich ist wie manche es behaupten wollen. Warum sollte dann die Übernahme der Verwendung der qur´anischen Begriffe in der Bibel ein Problem darstellen? Die positiven Erfahrungen in Kasachstan, Indonesien und Bangladesch scheinen zu bestätigen, dass die Übernahme islamischer Begriffe (z.B., Begriffe für Beten, Fasten, Glauben) und Namen (Abraham als Ibrahim, Moses als Musa, Jesus als Isa und Gott als Allah) in den Text der Bibel deren Akzeptanz erleichtert, und ermutigender Weise, auch nicht Spuren von Synkretismus bis dato hinterlaßen hat. Natürliche muß man vorsichtig sein und die Gafahren des Synkretismus nicht minimieren.

Abstract/Summary: Reimer suggests that one of the reasons Muslims react so strongly against Christianity and its main religious book—the Bible—is the terminology which is used in Bible translations for Muslims. Why? Because "religious terminology" and its meaning is not neutral; instead, it determines to a great extent what is at the core of a given culture, and hence, what governs the thoughts and actions of people in more ways than appearance might indicate. Hence, it is very important not to construct unnecessary barriers when translating the Bible. Reimer proposes, for instance, that some key words (e.g., words used for prayer, fasting, church, faith, devotion) and key names (e.g., Ibrahim for Abraham, Musa for Moses, Isa for Jesus, and Allah for God) which are used in the Qur'an, be also used in the Bible translations for Muslims. One of the reasons he gives for this proposal is that there are historic-linguistic evidences of borrowing from Aramaic Bible translations for the Qur'an. Hence, the original Qur'an is not as anti-Christian as some think. Of course, using words from the Qur'an in the Bible brings about debates, especially for those who are anti-Islamic, and who suggest, for instance, that Allah is an Arabic desert-demon and that Islam is an anti-Christian manifestation. However—as the Tübingen missiologist Peter Beyerhaus has indicated—every religion has three elements: a core of truth, human additions, and demonic tergiversations. Hence, much wisdom and careful thought needs to be given while translating words from a

different religion. Huge revivals in Kazakhstan, Indonesia and Bangladesh, where Muslim-background Christians do not significantly differ from other mainstream Evangelical-charismatic groups, show that "Islam-sensitive" Bible translations do not necessarily lead to syncretism. Reimer pleads that the efficiency of a Bible translation be measured—although not exclusively—by the faith/obedience it brings about in its readers.

Der Resistente Islam

Bibelübersetzung verfolgt in der Regel das Ziel – den Menschen Gottes Wort, seine Selbstoffenbarung, das Evangelium zugänglich zu machen. So gesehen, handelt es sich hierbei um einen im höchsten Maße missionarischen Kommunikationsvorgang. Gemessen wird das Ergebnis kommunikativer Vorgänge an der Verständlichkeit der Rede, die sich im Falle des Evangeliums im Glaubensgehorsam äußert. Mit anderen Worten, man kann die Effektivität der Bibelübersetzung an der Effektivität der Glaubensvermittlung messen.

Wendet man das oben Gesagte auf die Bibelübersetzung in Sprachen von Völkern an, die dem Islam anhängen, so müsste man von einer weitgehenden Verfehlung des anvisierten Zieles reden. Nicht nur führt die Übersetzung der Bibel nicht zum erstrebten Glaubensgehorsam, sondern geradezu umgekehrt, der Text der Bibel wird zur Quelle intensiver Ablehnung des christlichen Glaubens, entdeckt doch der gläubige Muslim in der Bibel eine Verfälschung der Offenbarung Gottes. Je fremder nun der Text dem Muslimen vorkommt, desto größer die Ablehnung seines Inhalts. Kommunikationstechnisch kann man hier nur von einer fehlerhaften, ins Leere laufenden Kommunikation reden. Der Islam ist im wahren Sinne des Wortes zu einer „Herausforderung" geworden, um den provozierenden Titel des Buches von Gerhard Konzelmann zu zitieren.[1]

Sicher gibt es Erklärungen für die Resistenz der Muslime gegenüber dem Evangelium. Der eng gesetzte Rahmen dieses Vortrages ermöglicht es mir leider nicht, auf diese im Detail einzugehen. Eine der Ursachen, so scheint es mir, ist die Sprache der Verkündigung, die die Missionare bemühen. Diese füllt nicht nur die Regale christlicher Literatur zum Thema Islam, sondern hat längst auch in Bibelübersetzungen Einzug

[1] Konzelmann 1991.

gehalten. Gemeint ist eine islamfremde „christliche“ Sprache, die sich zunehmend als hinderlich erweist.

Lassen Sie mich so viel sagen, dass die weiter unten diskutierten Gedanken zu einer sprachlichen Erneuerung der Evangeliumsverkündigung bei weitem nicht alle Fragen beantworten. Und doch stellen sie eine der wichtigsten Anfragen an die Evangeliumsverkündigung. Ist es doch im Wesentlichen die Sprache, derer wir uns bedienen, um Gottes Wort an die Menschen zu bringen. Und ist es doch vor allem die Sprache, die falsch angewandt zur Pathologie des gesamten Kommunikationsprozesses führt, also das Missionsvorhaben an sich in Frage stellt.

Die Arbeits-Frage des heutigen Vortrags ist also berechtigt: „Kann es sein, dass es die Sprache der Bibelübersetzung selbst ist, die die Vermittlung des Wortes Gottes an Muslime erschwert?“ Und falls ja, welche Sprache wählen wir dann, wenn wir Gottes Wort in Worte und Bilder der entsprechenden Kultur bringen?

Vorsicht - Synkretismus

Bibelübersetzer bedienten sich in der Vergangenheit in der Regel des sogenannten Übersetzungs- oder Translationsmodells. Sie suchten den Text der Bibel möglichst wortgetreu wiederzugeben. Hier wird rational gearbeitet. Für Begriffe der Bibel sucht der Übersetzer analoge Vorstellungen in der Kultur. Sicher geschah das nicht ohne eine gewisse dynamische Anpassung der Begriffe an das Sprachempfinden des Kontextes, und doch stand die möglichst wortgetreue Wiedergabe des Textes im Mittelpunkt des Interesses. Getrieben war ein solches Vorgehen von der Angst der synkretistischen Verfälschung des Wortes. Dabei stellte und stellt die religiöse Sprache des Zielvolkes eines der größten Hindernisse dar. Religiöse Vorstellungen bilden das Herz der jeweiligen Kultur, sie dominieren das Denken und Handeln weit mehr als das nach außen erscheinen mag. Religiös besetzte Sprache schafft Glaubenswirklichkeit, bestimmt die Spiritualität eines Volkes. Sie ist also nicht beliebig einsetzbar.

Verständlicherweise ist bei einer solchen Ausgangslage Vorsicht geboten, wenn man religiöse Begriffe zur Darstellung biblischer Wahrheiten bemüht. Dazu kommt die immer noch weit verbreitete Haltung, dass alle nichtchristlichen Religionen dämonisch korrumpiert sind und daher ein wie auch immer gearteter Dialog mit ihnen von vorne

herein abzulehnen sei. Erst recht, wenn es um die Übernahme ihrer Sprache in die Übersetzung der göttlichen Offenbarung geht. Da scheint die Suche nach einer „neutralen“ Sprache von Vorteil.

Die Vertreter einer solchen Schule verweisen gerne auf den entsprechenden Kontextualisierungsvorgang im Neuen Testament selbst. Denken wir da nur an die recht bemerkenswerte Entscheidung Jesu und der Apostel, den sozio-politischen Begriff der Ekklesia für die Versammlung der Nachfolger Christi zu verwenden.

Doch der Versuch biblische Offenbarung an der religiösen Sprache des Kontextes vorbei zu übersetzen, ist auch mit enormen Problemen behaftet. Sprache , die sich dem Prinzip der Rationalität beugt, steht in der Gefahr das Eigentliche des religiösen Inhalts aus dem Blick zu verlieren. Romano Guardini schrieb in seiner überaus lesenswerten Abhandlung zur religiösen Sprache 1955: „Versucht die Rationalität ihren Inhalt (gemeint ist die religiöse Sprache) auf welthaft-logische Eindeutigkeit zu bringen, dann zergeht das Eigentliche, und es bleibt etwas übrig, das, auch bei höchstem Aufwand der Wissenschaft, im Grunde banal ist. Daher der Eindruck den jeder Rationalismus hinterlässt, wenn er über das Religiöse spricht, die Verwunderung darüber, wie so viel Material und Methode etwas derart Bedeutungsloses zutage fördern könne – eine Bedeutungslosigkeit, welche durch die Erfahrung des einfachsten Menschen und ihren Ausdruck im echten Wort widerlegt wird.“[2] Man kann sich also nicht unbestraft von der Religiösen Praxis, dem religiösen Empfinden der Menschen entfernen, wenn man an die Übersetzung von Glaubenstexten geht. Wort und Wirklichkeit müssen sich in gewisser Hinsicht finden, sonst wird das Wort missverständlich, ja gar wirklichkeitsfremd.

Sicher mag es hier und da richtig sein, die religiöse Terminologie in der Bibelübersetzung mit maximaler Vorsicht zu behandeln. Eine solche Praxis scheint sich im Bereich des Hinduismus und Buddhismus und auch des Animismus weitgehend als richtig erwiesen zu haben, misst man es an dem Erfolg und Akzeptanz der Bibel in diesen Ländern. In islamischen Ländern dagegen fehlt der Erfolg weitgehend. Die wenigen Ausnahmen bestätigen die Regel.

Kann es sein, dass es im Bereich des Islam geradezu dienlich wäre, quor´anische Begriffe in die Sprache der Bibel zu übernehmen, der arabischen Schreibweise und

[2] Guardini 1955:71.

Aussprechweise der christlichen Begriffe Vortritt zu gewähren? Würde es Sinn machen eine Bibel in Englisch oder Deutsch mit islamischer Sprache für die anglophonen oder deutschsprachigen Muslime auf den Markt zu bringen? Sollte man sich darum bemühen, in den Gebieten mit starkem islamischen Einfluss in der Kultur und Sprache, arabisch-quor´anische Ausdrucksweisen einzusetzen, so das Abraham als Ibrahim, Moses als Musa, Jesus als Isa und Gott als Allah die Akzeptanz des Gesamttextes erhöhen? Brauchen wir eine Bibel in islamischer Sprache? Und würde sie wesentlich zu Evangelisierung der weitgehend evangeliumsresistenten Muslime führen? Das ist die Frage hinter diesem Vortrag?

Ein Ermutigendes Beispiel

Erfahrungen mit einem entsprechenden Text des Neuen Testaments für Juden, sind überaus ermutigend. Das jüdische Neue Testament von David H. Stern[3] ersetzt konsequent „christliche“ Begriffe mit jüdischen. Man geht heute davon aus, dass der Beitrag dieser Übersetzung zu Evangelisierung der Juden in Europa (ich habe nur hier den Überblick) enorm ist. Mittlerweile gibt es diese Übersetzung in einer Reihe anderer europäischer Sprachen. In seinem leidenschaftlichen Apel an Christen mit dem bezeichnenden Titel: „Zurück zum Jüdischen im Evangelium. Eine Botschaft für Christen“, sucht Stern Verständnis bei uns Christen des Westens für eine Rückkehr in der Übersetzung des biblischen Textes zu seinen jüdischen Wurzeln. Das Unvermögen der Juden, Gottes Wort anzunehmen, liegt für ihn auch an der Tatsache, dass die allgegenwärtige christliche Sprache längst den Inhalt des jüdischen Wortes überlagert hat. Sie mag für Menschen im ehemals christlichen Euroamerika verständlich sein, verfehlt jedoch das Herz der Juden.[4]

Kann es sein, dass eine ähnliche Übersetzung für Muslime ähnliche ermutigenden Resultate tätigen würde? Erste Erfahrungen scheinen eine solche Vermutung zu bestätigen.

Ein ermutigendes Beispiel hierfür kommt aus Zentralasien. Zentralasien ist seit dem 9en Jahrhundert islamisiert worden. Alle einheimischen Völker in diesem

[3] Stern 1994.

[4] Stern 2002.

geographischen Raum bekennen den Islam als ihre Volksreligion. Auch die massive sowjetische antireligiöse Propaganda konnte an dieser Tatsache nur wenig ändern. Die hier lebenden Völker der Kasachen, Uiguren, Usbeken, Karakalpaken, Kyrgysen, Tadschiken, Turkmenen. Dunganen und anderen[5] blieben islamisch. Heute wenden sich Zehntausende unter ihnen dem Evangelium zu. Eines der Geheimnisse dieses religiösen Aufbruchs stellt die sorgfältig durchdachte Sprache der Bibelübersetzung.

In diesem ehemals sowjetischen Raum wurde die Bibel in der Regel in russischer Sprache gelesen. Seit einigen Jahren existieren auch Übersetzungen in die lokalen Sprachen. In Kasachstan, wo der Prozess der Russifizierung am weitesten vorangeschritten war, ist trotz der vorhandenen Übersetzung der Bibel in die kasachische Sprache das Russische immer noch die primäre Quelle für Menschen, die nach der Wahrheit Gottes suchen. Die meisten heute in den kasachischen Gemeinden tätigen Pastoren sind über die russische Sprache und die in dieser Sprache vorhandene Literatur zum Glauben an Jesus gekommen. Die ersten Muslime fanden gleich nach der Öffnung des Landes unter Michail Gorbatschow zum Glauben an Jesus. Doch die Durchdringung der islamisch-kasachischen Gesellschaft mit dem Evangelium war, gemessen am Aufwand, relativ gering.

Vor wenigen Jahren erschien das Neue Testament für Muslime in russischer Sprache. Hier verwandte man Namen und Bezeichnungen, die im Qur´an üblich sind. So wurde Abraham zu Ibrahim, Moses zu Musa, Gott zu Allah und so weiter. Eine Reihe weiterer Begriffe wurden bewusst dem islamischen Gebrauch angepasst: Namen Gottes, Bezeichnungen für Gebet, das Fasten, Gemeinde, der Name Jesu, Bezeichnungen für den Teufel, Dämonen, Glauben, Hingabe um einige zu nennen.

Das Ergebnis war erstaunlich: Heute zählt die kasachische Christenheit Zehntausende von Gläubigen, die Gott als Allah und Jesus als Isa al Massich identifizieren und anbeten. Sie besuchen ihre Gemeinden, die sie bewusst dem Inneren einer Moschee angepasst haben, und benutzen eine Sprache, die eindeutig der islamischen nachempfunden wurde. Doch Spuren von Synkretismus vermochte ich bis dato in dieser Bewegung nicht festzustellen. Kasachen, die Isa Nachfolger geworden sind und Allah anbeten, glauben an einen dreieinigen Gott, halten an einer orthodoxen

[5] Zu den Völkern Mittelasiens, siehe Reimer 1988:89ff.

Christologie fest und unterscheiden sich auch sonst recht wenig von dem Hauptstrom Evangelikal-charismatischer Christen anderswo. Ähnliches kann man in Indonesien und in Bangladesch feststellen. Der Zusammenhang zwischen einer für den Muslimen verständlichen Bibel und dem Wachstum der Gemeinde scheint offensichtlich.

Erleichtert also die Übernahme islamischer Begriffe in den Text der Bibel deren Akzeptanz? Die Erfahrungen in Kasachstan, Indonesien und Bangladesch scheinen diese Annahme bestätigen. Oder hat der geistliche Aufbruch in diesen Ländern weniger mit der Sprache, sondern mit anderen Faktoren zu tun? Untersuchungen in Zentralasien zeigen, dass es sowohl weitere Faktoren gibt, die den Aufbruch fördern. So scheint in Kasachstan, die Wiederentdeckung der christlichen Geschichte der Kasachen eine wesentliche Rolle spielen.[6] Diese Faktoren minimieren jedoch nicht die Bedeutung der geleisteten Kontextualisierung der religiösen Sprache selbst.

Der Versuch, Erfahrungen in Zentralasien und anderswo in Frage zu stellen scheint von der grundsätzlichen Haltung dem Islam gegenüber abhängig zu sein. Die Meinungen darüber, ob Islamismen in der Bibel und Theologie stören oder fördern, gehen weit auseinander. Und sie hängen stark davon ab, wie man das Phänomen Islam selbst beurteilt. Denn während die einen im Islam eine Abrahamitische Religion sehen und sie für ihren ausgesprochenen Monotheismus loben, lehnen sie die anderen radikal als antichristlich ab. Während die ersten für die „Heilung der zerbrochenen Familie Abrahams“ streiten,[7] streiten die anderen gegen jede wie auch immer geartete positive Haltung dem Islam gegenüber. Auf der einen Seite wird Dialog gefordert, auf der anderen jedes Gespräch mit den Muslimen als antichristliche Erscheinung verdammt. Die Forderung nach einer Abrahamitischen Ökumene, wie es Hans Küng formulierte,[8] stehen

[6] Manarbeck 2007.

[7] McCurry 1996.

[8] Der Begriff **Abrahamitische Ökumene** geht auf die Theologen Hans Küng und Karl-Josef Kuschel zurück. Sie betonen damit die Notwendigkeit eines Trialogs der drei monotheistischen Weltreligionen Judentum, Christentum und Islam und fassen sie unter dem Oberbegriff der abrahamitischen Religionen zusammen.. Siehe Küng 1990; 2002, Kuschel 2001. Siehe weitere Literatur bei der Stiftung Weltethos: http://weltethos.org/st_4_xx/st_41_d.htm.

einer radikalen Ablehnung gegenüber. Hier wird in Allah ein arabischer Wüstendämon und im Islam eine ausgesprochen antichristliche Erscheinung vermutet.[9]
Die Wahrheit wird wie immer irgendwo in der Mitte liegen.

Islam – Religion der Gottsucher Oder Antichristliche Verführung

Ohne im Detail diese unterschiedlichen Haltungen besprechen zu können, gehe ich davon aus, dass dem Islam zweifelsfrei der Verdienst zukommt, den Monotheismus in den arabischen Stämmen eingeführt zu haben.[10] Der Qur´an enthält große Teile der biblischen Geschichte nahezu unverfälscht. Und das sowohl aus dem Alten als auch Neuen Testament.[11] Freilich fügt der qur´anische Text gewisse Nuancen und zum Teil auch grobe Fehler hinzu. Doch viele Texte des Qur´an weisen eine erstaunliche Nähe zum biblischen Text auf.[12]

Der Qur´an enthält eine recht positive Haltung zur Bibel selbst. Erst in den späten Teilen des Qur´an,[13] ist eine negative Haltung Mohammads der Bibel gegenüber zu verzeichnen. Hier liegen die Wurzel für die sogenannte Theorie der Verfälschung der Offenbarung Gottes durch die Juden und Christen.[14] Doch diese Teile vermögen die Tatsache nicht zu verdunkeln, dass es unzählige Parallelen zwischen der Bibel und dem Qur´an gibt. Erinnert man sich daran, dass zur Lebenszeit Mohammads es noch keine arabische Schriftsprache gegeben hat und die Araber seiner Zeit nur zu den für sie recht verständlichen aramäischen Texten Zugang gehabt haben, so ist der Verdacht auf der Hand, dass es eben biblische Teile in aramäisch gewesen sein mögen, die die Vorlage für den qur´anischen Text geliefert haben.[15] Man vermutet heute gar, dass es sich in Teilen

[9] Siehe zB: Peters in: http://www.horst-koch.de/joomla_new/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=32&Itemid=32.

[10] Zur Geschichte des Islam, sieheKellerhals 1993; Krämer 2005; Armstrong 2001; u.a.

[11] Siehe Wimmer 2005.

[12] Die Literatur zum Thema ist fast unerschöpflich. Siehe, zB Massod 2001.

[13] Zu der offensichtlichen Mehrschichtigkeit des qur´anischen Textes, siehe Neuwirth 2007.

[14] Siehe dazu: Schirrmacher.

[15] Luxenberg 2000:15ff.

beim Koran um eine Erklärung der Heiligen Schrift in der arabischen Sprache handelt.[16] Ich erinnere hiermit nur mal an die provozierenden Thesen des Semitisten Christoph Luxenberg,[17] der sich die Mühe macht, den Qur´an auf dem Hintergrund einer angenommenen Syro-aramäischen Vorlage zu lesen. Seine Thesen, die davon ausgehen, dass die islamische Rezeption des Qur´ans auf wesentlichen Missverständnissen beruht, erfahren nach wie vor breite Aufmerksamkeit.[18] Man kann also den Qur´an recht unterschiedlich lesen. Unterschiedliche Zugänge und Lesarten des Qur´an werden offensichtlich auch unterschiedliche Ergebnisse befördern.[19] Zumal neueste Qur´an Forschungen eher von einer deutlichen Zweiteilung des Qur´ans in einen mekkanischen und medinischen Teil ausgehen. Wobei die alle Abgrenzungstexte, die sich von den Juden und Christen und ihren Büchern distanzieren im letzteren vorzufinden sind. Hanna Josua weist in seiner 2006 vorgelegten Dissertation deutlich nach, das diese Texte reaktiver Natur sind und auf die Unwilligkeit der Christen und Juden zurückgehen, sich dem Führungsanspruch Mohammads zu beugen.[20] Während nun Suren aus dem mekkanischen Teil weitgehend Bibel freundlich sind, unterscheiden sich die medinischen wesentlich davon. Es kommt also sehr darauf an, welchen Teil des Qur´ans man zitiert. Man kann wohl davon ausgehen, dass der mekannische Teil des Qur´ans starke Anleihen aus biblischen Texten macht. Wahrscheinlich handelt es sich dabei um aramäische Vorlagen, die ins arabische übersetzt wurden.

Es gäbe also Grund genug qur´anische Begrifflichkeit als eine Übersetzung biblischer Begriffe in die arabische Sprache zu sehen. Die Nähe des Namens Gottes Allah zu biblischen Begriffen wie El oder Elohim, zB., wird auch von islamischen Gelehrten bejaht.[21] Noch näher ist der Begriff Allah zum aramäischen Alaha. Die Verwandtschaft

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[16] Siehe hierzu das überaus interessante Interview mit Christoph Luxemberg, der den Text des Koran nach einer angenommenen Vorlage aus dem Aramäischen übersetzt und zu erstaunlichen Neuinterpretationen gelangt. http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article343267/Der_Koran_erklaert_die_Bibel_auf_Arabisch.html.

[17] Luxenberg 2000. .

[18] Siehe zB den Aufsatzband von Christoph Burgmer (2004); Angelika Neuwirth in: http://www.islamic-awareness.org/Quran/Text/luxreview1.html.

[19] Siehe eine Übersicht bei Hans Zirker (1999).

[20] Josua 2006.

[21] Radhan.

der Begriffe ist offensichtlich. Ähnliches kann auch an Hand weiterer Begriffe deutlich gemacht werden. Jedenfalls ist der biblische Einfluss auf die Entstehung des qur´anischen Textes nicht zu übersehen. Warum sollte dann die Übernahme der Verwendung der qur´anischen Begriffe in der Bibel ein Problem darstellen?

Das Christentum lieferte dem Islam aber nicht nur die Sprache und damit wesentliche theologische Konzepte. Unmissverständlich sind christlich-byzantinische Einflüsse in der islamischen Kultur. Das wohl deutlichste Beispiel hierfür bietet die islamische Architektur.[22] Aber auch in der islamischen Kunst sind christliche Vorbilder nicht zu leugnen, wie Oleg Grabar in seiner Monographie zu islamischer Kunst nachweist.[23] Nachweist. Auch andere kulturelle und ethische Themen des Korans weisen judeo-christliche Wurzel auf. Somit ist weder die islamische religiöse Sprache, noch ihre Symbolik christentumsfremd.

Freilich der Islam ist keine christliche Sekte und der Qur´an auch nicht die arabische Bibel. Wäre es so, so erübrigte sich die Bibelübersetzung in die Sprache der Araber. Beides der Qur´an und der Islam enthalten weitgehend von der biblischen Offenbarung abweichende theologische Positionen. Es handelt sich dabei nicht nur um Irrlehren, sondern zum Teil um massive antichristliche Behauptungen. Es besteht also Gefahr der Glaubensvermischung, wenn man islamische Terminologie bedenkenlos in Bibelübersetzungen einsetzt. Man sollte also unterscheiden, wo und wie man Islamismen in biblischen Texten einsetzt.

Die so angesprochene Vorsicht darf allerdings nicht das Unternehmen selbst in Frage stellen. Denn alle religiöse Suche der Menschen zeichnet sich durch eine überaus verletzbare Sprache aus. Der Tübinger Missionswissenschaftler Peter Beyerhaus schlug daher vor Weltreligionen als ein tripolares Konstrukt zu sehen. Religionen tragen, so Beyerhaus, einen wahren Kern und damit Überreste göttlicher Offenbarung, menschliche Hinzufügung und dämonische Verdrehung.[24] Wo immer wir religiöse Sprache für die Übersetzung göttlicher Wahrheit bemühen werden, müssen wir mit der Tripolarität der Phänomene rechnen. Das ist auch im Bezug auf den Islam nicht anders. In der

[22] Antablin 1990:373ff.

[23] Grabar 1973.

[24] Beyerhaus in Schirrmacher 1999.

Kontextualisierung muss es in gewisser Hinsicht zur Heiligung der religiösen Sprache kommen. Das wäre, übrigens, bei der Übernahme „neutraler Sprachakte“ nicht viel anders.

Bibel für Muslime – Warum Ja!

Die recht preliminär vorgetragenen Argumente lassen den Gedanken zu, eine Bibelübersetzung mit bewusst aus dem Islam übernommenen Begriffen zu wagen. Es wäre jedenfalls nicht ganz abwegig. Von der Pragmatik eines solchen Unternehmens her zu urteilen, wäre es gar von großem Vorteil. Was würde eine solche Übersetzung bringen. Folgendes ließe sich denken:

a. Sie würde die Angst der Muslime vor der “verfälschten” Offenbarung abbauen und entsprechend Neugierde wecken.

b. Sie würde die religiöse Sehnsucht der Muslime mit einer Sprache des Evangeliums zusammenführen, die sie verstehen. Auf diese Weise käme die religiöse Wirklichkeit mit der Sprache zusammen und das Wort Gottes würde wieder Bedeutung erhalten.

c. Sie würde muslimische Feindbilder über das Christentum in Frage stellen. Wo Christen zu Allah beten und gemeinsam dem allmächtigen dienen in verständlicher und durchsichtiger Art und Weise, da lassen sich Vorurteile nicht so leicht kultivieren.

d. Sie würde das Gespräch zwischen Christen und Muslime fördern.

e. Sie würde die Hinkehr der Muslime zu Christus erleichtern.

In den Ländern, wo die Bibelübersetzung für Muslime bereits eingesetzt wird, lassen sich diese und weitere positive Momente beobachten.

Welche negative Entwicklungen wären zu erwarten? Man hat oft auf eine mögliche Islamisierung der Theologie in den Gemeinden mit weitgehend islamischer Terminologie hingewiesen. Theoretisch lässt sich eine solche Entgleisung wohl denken, in der Praxis ist sie mir jedoch kaum bekannt. Vermutlich äußern sich bei solchen Bedenken eher die Ängste der Christen, die hinter jedem islamischen Busch den Teufel vermuten. Ich will die Gefahren nicht herunterreden. Aber auch eine Problematisierung rein theoretischer Natur hilft wenig weiter.

Und zum Schluss. Wie würden christliche Gemeinde in Deutschland reagieren, falls es wirklich zu einer solchen Bibelübersetzung für Muslime käme. Ich denke viele würden mit Empörung reagieren. Ganz anders als das im Bezug auf das jüdischen Neue Testament geschehen ist. Davor werden viele von uns wahrscheinlich am meisten zurückschrecken. Dürfen wir es? Sollte die Mission und Evangelisation unserer muslimischer Nachbarn uns nicht wichtiger sein als die politischer Korrektness? Ich jedenfalls wäre bereit zu riskieren.

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The Contextualization Debate: What About Leadership?

By Marcus Dean

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Abstract. The concept of contextualization is a solid part of the theological thinking of the Global Church. As contextualization extends beyond theological debate, church leadership needs to be included. Contextualizing leadership allows the church to develop leaders that are culturally relevant. Christian leadership thus is not a particular style—perhaps imported by the missionary—but can be any culturally appropriate leadership style that is guided and transformed by biblical principles such as servanthood.

Theology has long been recognized as the primary focus of contextualization. There is growing awareness however that contextualization needs to be "comprehensive" (Moreau 2006, 325). In general the contextualization debate, when extended beyond theology, focuses on concerns such as church growth, worship styles, evangelism, and even building structures. Having served in missions in the area of pastoral training, I have been concerned about contextualizing leadership. The basic question is, "Should church leadership be contextualized?"

Why Contextualized Leadership?

The limited discussion on the subject could be understood to mean that contextualized leadership is a non-issue. Furthermore, much of what happens in missions, especially in short-term missions, tends to prepare national leaders as if they were in the missionary's home country. Duane Elmer declares that when we as outsiders "serve others from our own frame of reference . . . it is perceived as superiority, cultural imperialism or neocolonialism" (2006, 20). If we also teach others to lead as we do, would this not also add to the perception that Christianity is a foreign religion?

How then do we advance the contextualized leadership question? One aspect of the contextualizing task is to "*establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context . . .*" (Whiteman 1997, 2) (italics added). Is this not true of leadership as well? Samuel Escobar states that leaders "recognized and loved by the people are those who have come from among them, made of the same stuff, able to communicate in the language and cultural patterns that the followers recognize" (1992,

11). It would seem logical to ensure that these leaders are also leading according to their cultural patterns.

Writing about the need for indigenous leadership within ethnic congregations, Fransen helps us understand the need for contextualized leadership. He argues that using leaders that come from the local community builds "respect for the ethnic culture", and provides leaders who can "converse, preach, pray, and sing in the 'mother tongue'" (1985, 61). The problem is that the outsider may not see these local patterns as valid leadership patterns. If the mission's agenda fails to allow or encourage leadership to develop in culturally appropriate forms, can the church help but fail to develop in ways that are meaningful and significant to the people?

Elmer, in focusing on leadership as servanthood, states that "serving must be sensitive to culture while remaining true to Scripture" (2006, 12). To contextualize leadership, pertinent aspects of culture need to be considered to demonstrate the influence of culture on leadership. This can be done from both missiology and the business world. Basic concepts from both fields show that people simply do not respond to universal leadership styles.

Leadership is basically the exercise of authority and power, thus influence. How this part of leadership is implemented will be determined by the social factors of the culture. Lingenfelter explains that this is true because the use of authority and power occurs within the "relationships between individuals, and between individuals and groups" (1992, 140). Both dimensions involve important cultural dynamics.

Leaders are most effective when they function in agreement with the cultural or social context. The common practice in missions of importing styles and patterns of leadership is unlikely to fulfill the cultural needs. Business practices recognize that culture shapes leadership "by determining basic assumptions about what leaders look like, how they behave, what their style is, whether they are men or women, whether they are black or white, and so on" (Derr, Roussillonm and Bournois 2002, xi).

Hofstede declares that there are no "universal solutions" for leadership (1980, 373) and that even theories about leadership need to be adapted to be useful when moving between cultures (1980, 381). On the other hand, simply bringing local leadership styles into the church and labeling them as Christian is a practice that can compromise Christian values and lead to church problems (Elliston 1992, 11).

For leadership to be contextualized, missions and the global church must proceed upon the basis of sound biblical principle as well as cultural understanding. The question to be asked is, "How does the Gospel speak to leadership styles within a given culture?" This study will first look at a few examples of how culture influences leadership and then how the Bible speaks to cultural leadership styles.

The Nature of Contextualized Leadership

Gaining a basic understanding of cultural differences and their influence on leadership leads to an awareness of the need for contextualizing leadership. Leaders are leaders, not by being in a position, but by being recognized by their followers as leaders. This recognition comes via appropriate "behaviors, traits, characteristics and outcomes produced by leaders as these elements are interpreted by followers" (Yan and Hunt 2005). It is logical that proper interpretation by the followers requires appropriate cultural dynamics to be demonstrated by the leaders.

Different approaches to understanding cultural differences have been developed. While these are arguably outsider or etic concepts, they have been accepted as tools for comprehending cultural variations in behaviors. A few of these factors will be studied to show how leadership does in fact vary across cultures.

One of the best known cultural differences, the dimension of individualism/collectivism, comes from Geert Hofstede's work. An individualistic society focuses on getting tasks done, explicit communication, and everyone having an opinion—individual self-interest is primary (Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede 2002, 94). Meanwhile those from a collective society focus on relationships, communicate indirectly, and obligation to the group—harmony within the group is primary (Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede 2002, 96).

It does not take deep understanding to realize that a leader from one orientation and followers from another will quickly end in an impasse of misunderstanding and ineffectiveness. Leaders from the individualism side will be expecting initiatives from followers while collectivist followers are depending on the group and the leader's direction (Bentley 2002, 33-34).

Another common cultural dynamic has been labeled as "Power Distance" (Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede 2002, 99-100). In this cultural dimension the use of power is on a continuum from hierarchy to equality. A leader from a hierarchical culture is considered to be powerful and privileged thus receiving high respect and submission from his followers. Benevolent dictators are considered ideal. A leader from an equality culture minimizes differences and works towards interdependence with her followers.

When two cultures that are far apart on this continuum interact, the result is differences in leadership behaviors. The interaction of styles without understanding will

produce confusion and negative reactions. It would be difficult for a person from a strong equality-based culture to recognize a leader from a strong hierarchical culture as exhibiting positive leadership traits when the tendency is to see that leader as domineering. The question for the church is not which style is correct, but how to exercise each style biblically.

Central to the idea of hierarchy is the aspect of authority. A leader's authority may be either ascribed or achieved. When a leader has ascribed authority it is because of who she is and thus should not be challenged. When authority is achieved it depends on what he has done and authority can quickly be lost (Huijser 2006, 28).

Huijser (2006, 58-59) recognizes the importance of charisma for any leader to exercise authority. Yet not all charisma is the same. A culture that focuses on action and success wants a leader with achieved status who can inspire and delegate. A culture that is thought-process-oriented wants a leader with ascribed status who they can trust for protection and direction, and thus will faithfully follow. Slightly different from action cultures are task-oriented cultures. It is not just about getting things done, but rather about the bigger picture of working together on the task that matters. Here achieved authority is important but the leader must involve the followers in the decisions and a consensus may be needed. Finally are role oriented cultures. In these cultures ascribed leaders are clearly at the top of the heap and are expected to use their power for the stability of the culture. The results are very different styles with very different leadership expectations.

These examples by no means exhaust the possible ways in which leadership must be contextualized. Yet they begin to demonstrate that leadership styles are not universal. The goal for cross-cultural leaders is to understand their own cultural makeup so that they can see how they need to adapt in order to lead in agreement with the host culture. Likewise, those involved in the formation of leaders have to recognize that leaders must reflect local cultural dynamics for the followers to recognize their leaders as valid. Paul in his argument about the use of tongues in states that "if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle" (I Cor. 14:8)? Could this statement also be applied to leadership in general? If the leader does not lead in culturally appropriate ways, who then will follow?

Biblical Transformation of Culturally Appropriate Leadership

While church leadership must be contextualized, it must be accomplished under the guidance of Scripture. Culturally appropriate leadership styles are not perfect and often need redemption or transformation. No cultural leadership style perfectly reflects the biblical values for leadership. Rather, the tendency is that fallen people in fallen cultures use leadership for their gain and to advance their personal interests (Lingenfelter 1992, 207).

Even though culturally appropriate leadership inadequately reflects biblical values, it is the starting point for the church. In order for the church to have contextualized leadership it has to accept that aspects of culture can be used and transformed to be more in line with biblical standards. Zahniser observes that

> Culture can and should be challenged when it violates Christocentric norms and values, adapted and modified when some of its goals and means are compatible with the gospel, and enhanced and empowered when its goals and means harmonize with transformed faith in the triune God. (Zahniser 1997, 169)

An essential task for those involved in missions is to help the church analyze its own cultural leadership styles. Then the church can mold these forms under God's guidance into effective church leadership styles.

The first step in the process of transforming cultural leadership is to understand the biblical teaching about church leadership. The Gospel message speaks to the spirit of leadership by focusing on key leadership issues.

The first leadership concern to be discussed relates to authority. The authority of the church leader is not based on the merit of the person nor the position. Rather it is delegated authority from Jesus (Lingenfelter 1992, 154). Jesus declared that "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt. 28:18). Nowhere is that authority transferred. When Jesus empowers the disciples, it is always with a reminder that he does the work through them (Mt. 16: 17-19, 18:18-20, and Acts 1:8).

The conclusion is that the "spiritual leader is one who voluntarily or willingly submits to the sovereign authority (lordship) of Jesus Christ to obey Him as directed for His benefit" (Elliston 1992, 23). The leader is able to be effective only as she follows

Jesus and his example, and is under his authority. Since biblical leadership is neither ascribed nor achieved both methods of granting leadership can be used and transformed.

A second concern of biblical leadership is service as we see in Jesus' example of serving (Mt. 20:28) as a leader. True service will challenge how leadership functions in any culture. The need for transforming any culture's leadership will be evident against this standard. There is no room for a leader who "tends to misuse others . . . [or] attempts to manage things by manipulating events" (Ward 1984, 33). A serving leader is not out to control. "The Christian leader must not be dictatorial. 'Not lording it over those entrusted to you' (1 Peter 5:3)" (Sanders 1994, 49). Rather the leader serves to empower and facilitate the church in living for God.

Since biblical leadership focuses first on service before greatness, humility is essential. "Service is the goal, and greatness is defined by Christ in his lifelong exercise of servanthood: 'Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant' (Mt 20:26)" (Elmer 2006, 24). Jesus showed his greatness in humility by washing the disciples' feet, a culturally appropriate act. Each culture has to ask how humble service is to be defined within its context to enable true biblical leadership. Again, what constitutes humble service may seem strange to the outsider; humbly serving a superior may look like groveling to a low power distance or equality based culture.

The third leadership concern is the chief motive for biblical leadership; love. Church leadership has to be aligned with the biblical message of serving with love. When a cultural leadership form falls short of this mark it needs to be critiqued and transformed. The goal of a leader serving from love has been explicitly laid out. Servant leaders "are those who share and thus lead. Servants are those who give and thus receive. Servants bear one another's burdens" (Ward 1984, 34). As previously mentioned, true Christian leaders are not out for personal gain.

Serving out of love may seem the antithesis of how the World sees power. However, biblically power is to be used with love. Jesus stressed that his followers are not to use power to "lord it over others" (see Mt. 20:25. Rather power is used to empower the body of Christ. "Power, when grounded in biblical values, serves others by liberating them. It acknowledges that people bear the image of God and treats them in a way that will nurture the development of that image. In so doing, we honor their creator" (Elmer 2006, 171). In this way, the leader shows love, by leading for the good of others. The

result is an empowered body engaged in the ministry of the body of Christ. Culturally inappropriate and unbiblical leadership will not see these results.

The fourth concern for biblical leadership comes from J. Oswald Sanders. Fulfilling the role of a servant-leader requires more than natural leadership ability. It also requires spiritual vitality. Sanders defines the character of a servant-leader as a person who "(is) confident in God, also knows God, seeks God's will, (is) humble, follows God's example, delights in obedience to God, loves God and others, and depends on God" (1994, 29). This places Christian leadership in stark contrast to much culturally acceptable leadership. Society can accept a leader as valid and good even when his character and morals are greatly flawed. Paul makes plain that this is not acceptable in the church (see I Tim. 3:1-10 and Titus 1:5-9). A significant aspect of this spiritual vitality is the humility discussed above.

Ephesians 4:12-16 indicates that leaders are to facilitate the body of Christ. Leaders should come from those who use their gifts for the church first and then are recognized as leaders by the church. In any culture, this practice will produce leaders who exercise their gifts in the community, recognize the gifts of others, listen to the voices of the body, and who let the wisdom of the community be heard (Elmer 2006, 163). Focusing on the body and not self, is a powerful tool for transforming leadership.

The second part of the process of contextualizing leadership is the facilitating task. It is not enough to recognize the need and to understand the biblical principles for church leadership. Mission and church leaders have to be able to help the local churches transform culturally relevant leadership styles so that they are in line with the biblical values for leadership. This is the essential, often difficult, aspect of contextualizing leadership.

Help for guiding the church in this process can be found. The critical contextualization process presented by Paul Hiebert suggests a procedure for working with a church as it develops its appropriate leadership styles (1994, 88-91). To lead a group through the following steps (adapted from Hiebert) will enhance the development of biblically based and culturally relevant leadership:

1. Study and describe the local leadership practices.
2. Study the Scripture in relation to leadership.

3. Lead the people in evaluating their leadership practices in light of the new biblical understanding.

4. Decide which aspects of present leadership styles can be kept, what has to be discarded, what needs to be transformed, and if something new needs to be invented or brought in.

5. Put the new understanding of Christian leadership into practice.

One safe guard for this procedure is to instill the idea that the process is never done and that leadership needs to be continually evaluated and adjusted.

A standard for the process of contextualization can be borrowed from Mathias Zahniser's work on cross-cultural discipling. "The models and methods we use must, of course, be compatible with Scripture and suitable for tuning the lives of disciples to the truth revealed in Scripture and embodied in Jesus Christ" (1997, 26). Applied to the leadership context this guide gives us the final word; The cultural leadership styles and patterns used in a local church context must, of course, be compatible with the scriptural truth of the leader as servant and suitable for turning the leader towards following Jesus Christ as his or her example of a servant leader.

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African Theology in Quest for Alternatives to the Hegemony of Western Theology

By Faustin Ntamushobora

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Abstract. Despite the fact that Africa is becoming one of the centers of Christianity in the world, the Church in Africa in general and her theology in particular continues to live and operate under the patronage of the Western church and theology. This article is a reflection of how African theology can be liberated from Western socio-cultural, theological, and economic dominion. The article defines and explains the origin and development of the African theology, then gives practical suggestions about how African theology can find appropriate theological starting points, develop a new interactive strategy with other theologies, contextualize curriculum and methodology, and emphasize stewardship for sustainability.

Introduction

Despite the fact that Africa is becoming one the centers of Christianity in the world as Jenkins (2002) and others have claimed, the church in Africa in general and her theology in particular continues to live and operate under the patronage of the Western church and theology. Bob Duncan speaking about *The Future of Anglicanism: An End to Western Hegemony*, observes that,

> Anglicanism in Africa, Asia and South America, along with Pentecostalism and Roman Catholicism, is at the center of this next Christendom. Nigeria alone, with double the number of Anglicans of just fifteen years ago, and one-quarter of all the world's Anglicans today, will consecrate another eighteen missionary bishops this January. But the Anglican tune and the call for the dance have long come from London or New York. The systems that govern the Anglican Communion are Western. The Anglican Communion Office is chiefly funded by American money. The Anglican Consultative Council has been dominated by British and American interests, and operates on the First World's paradigm of parliamentary rules and procedures. Or compare the anachronism of a "first among equals" chosen only from among British citizens and named by a secular Head of State. How peacefully, how cooperatively these systems change will determine much about the future of Anglicanism: Will the old systems be metamorphosed for a new day, or will the old systems be supplanted by new ones that emerge from the events of these days? (Duncan, 2006)

Duncan's observation is not new. The African report in *Third World Theologies* states: "Despite twenty-six years of independence, Africa is still a pure product of European

colonization" (Moreau, teaching notes on website). Unfortunately, almost fifty years after what I call the *shadow of independence*, Africa is experiencing neo-colonialism.

The Western hegemony from which African theology needs to be liberated can be summed up in five points. First, Western theology was centered on an individualistic worldview that did not fit the African believer's community-oriented worldview. Second, the Western theological curriculum taught in Africa was a transplantation of Western curricula and was expressed in foreign terms. Third, African theology was considered non-rational, non-systematic and was denied authority of dialogue with other theologies. Fourth, the methods used to teach the Western theological content were centered on formal education which was considered the best form of education. Last, the individualistic worldview did not prepare the African believers to be stewards of their community. Consequently, Africans have remained poor materially, despite the rich resources on the continent.

It should, however, be noted that the primary cause for misery in Africa is failure in leadership on the continent. Western imperialism tends to take advantage of African leadership loopholes**.** This is captured well in Chinua Achebe's book when he states, "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership . . . the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership" (1983, 1). The same lament can be echoed by many other Africans from different countries. For Muriu, "lack of visionary national and political leadership is one of the giants, the Goliaths, the major problems Kenya is facing" (in Stinton 2004, 260). The problem of leadership in Africa, in my judgment, can be summarized as follows:

First, some leaders lack a clear vision and goal. Unfortunately, we have leaders in Africa with eyes but few with sight. Vision is important. Even leaders are gifted but do not have clear vision of where they are leading the group, not much can be attained. Second, some leaders lack focus. Burke cites the Chinese proverb, "The eagle that chases two rabbits at one time will catch neither" (Burke 2004, 192). Leaders who want to do everything will lose focus. Without focus little is achieved. Third, some leaders fear succession**.** Leaders reproduce themselves. Unfortunately, we have in Africa leaders who fear to be replaced, and so cannot mentor other leaders, because they are clinging to their leadership positions.

Finally, some leaders lack fear of God. This is the reason why we have leaders who are well educated but who mismanage public funds and resources. They do not fear God. If we fear God we will be good stewards of God's people and resources, and we will live a life of integrity whether people see us or not (Ntamushobora, 2008).

This article seeks to define and explain the origin and development of African theology. It then offers practical suggestions for its liberation from a dominating Western approach to theology. The article suggests a different starting point for doing theology and developing a philosophy of education, a dialogue strategy in partnership, a more suitable curriculum and methodology for its development and sustainability.

What is African Theology and What is its Origin?

John Kurewa defines African theology as the study that seeks to reflect upon and express the Christian faith in African thought-forms and idioms as it is experienced in African Christian communities—and always in dialogue with the rest of Christendom (1975, 36). This definition implies that theology is thought, then expressed or communicated. This communication can be either written or oral. We can, therefore, learn African theology from a teacher in a school, from books in a library, or from wise people who have knowledge and share it verbally. These wise people constitute an important library for African theology. The definition brings two important elements for African theology: it is both reflected in the mind of an individual through critical thinking, and experienced in the community. The latter element is important because one of the critiques of the Western theology is that it has not trained and empowered African believers to transform their communities into places to enjoy God's reign. The last element that is highlighted in the definition is that African theology should always be in line with the rest of Christendom. This is so important because African theology should not be isolated from other theologies, especially during this time of globalization.

African theology is closely related to African independence movements. African theology was born as a search for African identity, selfhood and unity. Molyneux asserts that "the transition from colonial status to independent nationhood received impetus from internal and external factors and promoted the quest for the discovery of an 'African identity'" (1993, 23). In addition, Muzorewa (1985) explains that the origin of African theology lies in the African Pan-Africanism. Akintoye defines Pan-Africanism as "the

desire of Africans to pull together for mutual support, for their liberation, and a more effective voice in the affairs of the world" (Muzorewa 1985, 48). Pan-Africanism was expressed through the ideology of Negritude, a movement that sought to combat racism and colonialism. The movement began among the French-colonized African countries, with advocates such as Leopold Sedar Senghor who became the first president of Senegal. The same ideology of liberation was also moving among English-colonized countries and bore the name of African Personality, with advocates such as Kwame Nkrumah who became the first African president of Ghana. From the same perspective of liberation, African theologians began to write about African selfhood, self-worth and dignity (Martey, 1993).

Where is African Theology Today?

African Theology was born when the church was experiencing phenomenal growth, especially in the 1970s. Today, the growth of the African church has increased to such an extent that Africa is now one of the centers of Christianity in the world. It is imperative to have an African-born theology to govern the growing church so that this growth may be contextual and balanced.

African theology has made remarkable progress which deserves to be commended. The commendable first step is that theologians are paying attention to what lay people convey about their values and beliefs through their songs, poetry, oral recitation of verses, and other forms of oral communication found everywhere in the church in Africa. African scholars are now transforming this oral theology into written theology. Isaiah Majok Dau, a Sudanese theologian, has researched and collected Dinka songs that reflect the theological and philosophical thinking of the Sudanese about war and suffering in Sudan. His work is entitled, *Suffering and God: A Theological Reflection on the War in Sudan* (2002).

Molyneux K. Gordon, son of a former missionary in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and raised in Congo, served in theological education for many years. His dissertation was based on "the vibrant hymnology of the independent Kibanguist church in Congo" (Bowers, Article Review on website). Though Gordon is not an African, he writes with African passion and worldview. His work is commendable in regard to African oral theology.

African theologians have also reflected and communicated in written forms. People such as Alexis Kagame, Appiah-Kubi Kofi, John Mbiti, Byang Kato and many others, deserve to be appreciated for pioneering works on African theology. Contemporary theologians such as Kwame Bediako, Kwesi, Charles Nyamiti, Tokunboh Adeyemo, Tite Tienou and others whose writings have inspired reflection and have added value to the existing literature on African theology, also merit appreciation. A number of books and studies now exist that have developed different theological doctrines in accordance with the African thought. Stinton, in her book, *Jesus of Africa* (2004), presents Jesus as Life-giver, Mediator, Loved one, Family member and Leader. Also, Kombo, in his book, *The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought (2007),* wrestles with the doctrine of Trinity. Borrowing from the Bantu philosophy centered on the "ntu" (being), Kombo establishes the unity and communal relationships that exist in the Trinity. Theologians such as Kwame Bediako and others who have labored hard to see that African theology is developed should be appreciated. Specifically, we appreciate Tokunboh Adeyemo and his fellow African scholars for the production of the *African Bible Commentary*. Their work reflects the communal aspect of African theology, the *Ubuntu* sense of togetherness and unity that needs a serious consideration as we develop the African theology. We need more work done in collaboration, which would reflect Mbiti's famous adage: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, 108).

Despite these commendations, it should be noted that African theology is still developing. The curriculum for theological training is still dominated by courses and textbooks about Western theology. One of the reasons for the lack of contextualization in theological education in Africa is that many African theologians were mentored by Western theologians in Western schools and were slow to develop an authentically African theology.

Towards a Reconsideration of a Theological Starting Point, Strategy, Curriculum and Sustainability

Africa was introduced to a Western Christianity that tended to ignore much of African religion and culture. Thus, theology in Africa was taught from a foreign worldview and used foreign methods. It emphasized the individual and ignored the

premise that an African is because s/he belongs. There is need for reconsidering an appropriate theological starting point for African theology, a different strategy as it interacts with other ideas, a contextualized curriculum, a greater variety of educational strategies, and a plan for sustainability.

Reconsidering an Appropriate Theological Starting Point

Given that the gospel taught by Westerners seemed to be more cognitive than holistic, more individualistic than community-oriented, thus producing a church that is now termed as an inch deep and a mile wide, I concur with the Final Communiqué of the 1979 Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians which states that African theology should be "understood in the context of African life and culture and the creative attempt of African people to shape a new future that is different from the colonial past and the neo-colonialism present" (Kofi Apiah-Kubi & Sergio Torres, 1979). To illustrate this understanding, I would like to propose that we reconsider our understanding of salvation and sanctification based on the African worldview of relationship. I suggest that we do so by pivoting around two concepts: experiential relationship with God and stewardship.

An Experiential Relationship with God

In what ways could salvation and sanctification be explained in the African worldview? I would suggest the term e*xperiential relationship* with God as better-suited to describe salvation among the communal African people. The experiential relationship with God comes from reading and/or hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Bible, or hearing the *kerygma*, the gospel proclaimed (Romans 10:17). This relationship is a personal paradigm shift in the life of the believer who, after a clear understanding of the gospel and an internal conviction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37), accepts and repents of his/her sins and turns to Christ who alone can reconcile human beings with the Creator (not the ancestors). From this time onward, the new believer becomes a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and has peace with self, God, and the rest of creation (Romans 5:1-5). I would also suggest that *growing in relationship with God, with oneself, with others and with creation* is a better-suited way of explaining the Western term sanctification. And so, once one is in Christ, his/her relationship should grow as s/he continues to hear and

read the Bible and interact with his/her fellow believers, especially those who are maturing in their relationships with their Lord Jesus Christ. The growth should lead the believer to be transformed in the likeness of Christ (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:1-17). It is through the experiential relationship that the new believer discovers the love and grace of Christ as opposed to the fear that the living Africans feel in relation to the ancestors.

Stewardship

The concept of stewardship bridges the gap that an individualistically oriented Western theology created in the lives and communities of African believers. The understanding of stewardship in a holistic perspective helps African believers cultivate their horizontal relationships with other people and the rest of creation. Believers who have had an experiential relationship with God and who are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 2:18) are challenged to give themselves wholly to God as living sacrifices—as opposed to the dead sacrifices that were offered to the dead spirits of the ancestors (Romans 12:1-2). Once believers understand who God is as Creator and the love of God for his creation, they begin to turn to God in humble adoration and learn to serve God with their talents, spiritual gifts, time, and other resources. The believers are also challenged to love God's creatures; and to love their neighbors as God would love them without, for example, considering tribal, ethnic or racial backgrounds, education, gender, and region of origin (see 1 John 4:7-21). Believers would also grow to maturity in redeeming the stewardship mandate that was lost due to the fall—that of having dominion over creation (Genesis 1:29-30). They learn care of the environment, knowing that God has placed them in a particular country or community to use the existing resources for people and God's Kingdom. This is the philosophical foundation that African theology needs for evangelism and discipleship. This could lead to the holistic transformation that is desperately needed in Africa.

Reconsidering the Strategy: Towards Dialogue

During its formative stage, African theology was perceived to be irrational and un-systematic and was not acknowledged by many Western theologians as a valid and reliable theology. However, today, Western theologians tend to acknowledge the existence and importance of the African theology. It is important, then, for African

theologians to interact with lay people and other theologians, especially those from the West; adopting the practice of giving and receiving among themselves and among theologians in other parts of the world. Obviously, the church in Africa should appreciate the fact that the West brought the gospel to Africa; and missionaries are appreciated for their work among the African peoples. However, as the church in Africa becomes an important center of Christianity in the world, a mutual and equal partnership should develop with churches from the rest of the world. This type of partnership can occur through exchange of ministers and ministries for short or long term; sharing resources and talents such as African scholars co-writing with Western scholars, and exchange of professors in theological schools. Western and African scholars can learn from elderly African people who have rich knowledge expressed in proverbs, riddles, and poetry. They can experience together African worship styles and incorporate them in Western churches.

Reconsidering Theological Curriculum and Methodology

Generally speaking, the curricula taught in Bible and theological schools in Africa have been carbon-copies of some Western curricula. As Glisczinski notes, "When learners are reduced to replicators, they follow inherited mental maps, which may be unreliable for navigating the current dynamics of postmodern life" (Glisczinski 2007, 319). There is, therefore, need for more research related to the nature of African learning in African contexts in order to contextualize curriculum in Bible and theological schools. Besides the need for local relevance, African theologians should be engaged in theological reflection that will result in written materials that are meaningful not only in the local context, but which can also be used in Western contexts. African curriculum developers should also discern and study the values and themes which are contained in riddles, analogies, and every-day conversations between generations. Moreover, when looking for ways to convey these values and themes, dialogical methods—besides the existing expository teaching methods—should be incorporated. Listen to the following conversation of a mum (Mukamana) mentoring her daughters (Hagenimana and Iradukunda) as they work together in the kitchen (Musekura & Ntamushobora, 2004):

Mukamana: Have you finished cleaning all the dishes?

Iradukunda: Yes, we finished quite a while back. There were not many dishes today. We have not had as many visitors as we did in the last two days.

Hagenimana: Mother, why do these people like coming to our home? I do not see them going to other homes as much as they come to ours!

Mukamana: Do not ask such questions. Don't you know that visitors bring blessings and good fortune? Haven't you ever heard that "Urugo ni urugendwa" (blessed is the home frequently visited). When people come to visit us they also bring us news from the distant lands. You remember, for instance, when mother Kanyange was here, she told us that your aunt's daughter of the seventh ridge got married to a rich man and they have a baby boy now!

Iradukunda: Mother, Hagenimana does not like washing dishes and that is why she is complaining about visitors.

Mukamana: What kind of a woman will you make, Hagenimana? Don't you know the proverb that says "*urugo rwiza rwakira abashyitsi*" (a good home provides for the hungry)? A woman who is growing up almost ready to be married should not hate visitors nor refuse to offer them food. This is not good for a respectable wife.

Hagenimana: Mother, I have heard and I will not repeat it again.

Mukamana: Yes, if you hate visitors, your house will be like a deep river. But if you welcome visitors, good will shall always be with you. You will get people to tell you about distant lands and events coming up in the community. You will also get someone to scratch your back. My daughters, I would like you to be hard working so that you will get good men to marry. No man wants to marry a lazy girl. You go to bed now so that tomorrow you will rise early to fetch water before going to the farm.

Is this not transformative? The young girls are acquiring knowledge of the culture, wisdom of life, and formation of character.

Reconsidering Ministry Training Opportunities

Western formal education tends to leave the impression that a competent person is one with a credential or degree from formal education in an accredited school. Experience has demonstrated that this is not always true. There are many good theologians among the pastors and leaders who have been trained non-formally and informally, living with people in the community. They are able to theologize, they just need to be helped to structure their reflection. African theologians can help by

considering the input of leaders with non-formal and informal education. They have something to offer and could supplement the work of those who have gone through formal education. For example, as a young theologian with theoretical knowledge sits at the feet of an old man with non-formal and informal education to learn from the experience of this old person, the young man could in turn teach the old man knowledge such as Bible survey, rules of Bible interpretation, and so on. In this way, the church in Africa would multiply servants for the mushrooming congregations, and Christian leaders and theologians would respect each other without considering titles and credentials as the sole parameters for theological competency. Furthermore, this would facilitate research as scholars in theological schools collaborate with experienced practitioners in the community. The former would facilitate the latter to collect relevant and credible data for research, and once the leaders on the ground are involved in the research, they would also be happy to be a part of the dissemination of the findings.

Reconsidering the Understanding of Stewardship

Most Western theology taught in Africa separated the body from the soul, which prepared African believers for heaven, but did not prepare them to have a transforming impact in their communities. This is one of the reasons why the church in Africa has remained dependent on the Western Church. If the African church continues to depend on the West for financial development, African theology will not gain its full independence, dignity and partnership authority. There is need for theologians to elaborate African holistic theology to help African believers understand stewardship of self (talents), stewardship of others (mentoring and servant leadership development), and stewardship of God's creation (discovery of resources around us and right use of them in God's Kingdom). This would enhance Africans' self-esteem, dignity, and identity.

Conclusion

If African Theology is not fully developed, the African church will remain an infant continuing to function under the hegemony of Western theology. Philosophically, African theology needs to be shaped on the foundations of African worldview and culture. Only this kind of philosophy can help African Christians to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds and strength.

Strategically, African theologians should remain open to a giving and receiving relationship with lay people and theologians from other parts of the world. Academically, there is need for African theologians to be engaged in theological reflection, making their theology meaningful both in the local and universal contexts. To do this well, African theologians should be engaged in empirical research and involve leaders on the ground. Finally, there is need for African churches and theological training institutions to work together to bridge the gap between the formal training offered in theological schools and the non-formal and informal training of ministry training so that the two groups may complement each other. The above can take place only if the African church is independent financially. There is, therefore, need for African theologians to elaborate African holistic theology which would emphasize the stewardship of self, others, and stewardship of God's creation, so that the African believers may discover the usefulness of resources around them and use them rightly in God's Kingdom.

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Identifying an Asian Theology: A Methodological Quest

By Moonjang Lee

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) to examine and assess the validity of Asian critiques of Western theology in order to decide whether those critiques serve well as a rationale for Asian theology and (2) to delineate the character of doing theology in an Asian way.

Introduction

The phrase 'Asian theology' has been widely circulated in the theological world today due to the pioneering efforts of many Asian theologians during the last decades.[1] We have seen a significant progress in our endeavour to present Asian theology as a theological discourse independent from and alternative to that of Western theology. At the same time we also hear indigenous voices from within the Asian theological circle criticising the authenticity of previous theological reflections.[2] However, it seems that there exists no consensus among Asian theologians about the identity of Asian theology. On the one hand, it is argued that, as Western theologians in their own settings do not consciously characterise their theologies as 'Western theology' in reaction to other non-Western theologies, we don't need to define what Asian theologians do as Asian theology, giving the impression of reactionary theology. On the other hand, regardless of the uphill battle some innovative Asian theologians have had in articulating Asian theology as an alternative to Western theology, most theologians in Asia show a rather lukewarm attitude to the business of constructing an Asian theology. At the same time, the quest for Asian theology has to deal with the presence and strong influence of the traditional theological structures in Asia.

[1] We can have a long list of Asian theologians who have endeavoured to create an Asian theological discourse. Her are some of their names: Shoki Coe, C.S. Song, Kosuke Koyama, D.T. Niles, Stanley Samartha, Aloysius Pieris, Ahn Byung-Mu, Suh Nam-Dong, Ro Bong-Rin, Rodrigo D. Tano, M.M. Thomas, Archie C. C. Lee, R.S. Sugirtharajah and many others.

[2] Cf. Rodrigo D. Tano, "Toward an Evangelical Asian Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* Vol 7 Number 1 (April, 1983), pp. 155-171. For a more recent work, see Haw Yung, *Mangoes and Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum, 1997).

We cannot refer to 'Asian theology' as an entity because we do not have a theology called 'Asian theology'. In fact, even with "Western theology" there is no such thing as a field of theology called 'Western theology'.[3] Actually, what we see in Asian theological circles is a number of theologies done by individual Asians like C.S. Song, Byung-mu Ahn, Kosuke Koyama, Preman Niles and many others. We also see a great diversity of perspectives and theological stances presented by Asian theologians. However, we can use the phrase "Asian theology" to refer collectively to Asian theologies done by Asians in Asia with Asian characteristics, regardless of the existence of any other common denominator.[4]

I. Asian Critiques of Western Theology

The rationale of our quest for an Asian theology is found in our awareness of the foreignness of the method and character of Western theologies. Asian theologians became discontent with the method and character of Western theology that is deemed to be alien to the cultural and religious experiences of Asian people. C. S. Song, a Taiwanese theologian, well expresses this sentiment of Asian theologians. He states the confidence and excitement of doing theology in Asia with Asian ways as follows:

> Doing theology in Asia today is exciting because it is no longer dictated by rules and norms established elsewhere outside our living space called Asia. Its contents are not determined any more by schools and systems of theology formed under the influence of cultural elements alien to cultural experiences of Asia. Its style - yes, one must speak of style of doing theology - does not have to be shaped by thought-forms and life-experiences remote from Asian humanity.[5]

Song points out that doing theology in Asia has been dictated by rules and norms established in the West. This observation contains a critique of Western theology as the product of the thought-forms and life-experience of Western people. The search for an

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[3] Also Kosuke Koyama, "The Tradition and Indigenization," *Asia Journal of Theology* 7/1 (April, 1993), p. 8. Koyama states that the definition of 'Western theology', which he calls as a vague concept, is a complex problem. He does not consider it proper to reject the relevance of 'Western theology' wholesale because he holds non-Western theologians have much to learn from it.

[4] Contra, S.J. Samartha, "The Asian Context: Sources and Trends," in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.) *Voices from the Margin. Interpreting the bible in the Third World* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 41, who bases the Asianness on the supposed commonness of Asian religio-cultural and socio-economic situations.

[5] Song, "Let us do Theology with Asian Resources," p. 208.

Asian method of doing theology is prompted by the discovery of foreignness of Western theology in Asia. Therefore, we need to investigate the Asian critiques of Western theology to ascertain the validity of both their critiques and their rationale for Asian theology.

Most Asian theologians find their justification of Asian theology in their critique of Western theology. We admit that it is not desirable to attempt to articulate Asian theology in reaction to Western theology. However, as Western theologies have strongly affected the way we do Christian studies in Asia, we cannot simply ignore the presence of Western theology. An Asian critique of Western theology is raised from three different angles. (1) Western theology is criticised for being a contextualised theology of the West. As Western theology is a theology contextualised in Western soil, it is not relevant in Asian soil where there are different questions and issues to which Western theology cannot give answers. (2) Contrary to the first critique, Asian theologians find Western theology to be a non-contextual theology, in that it is alienated from the life situations of Western people. It is perceived as an abstract theology being discussed only within the confined academic guild system. (3) Western theology, shaped under the influence of the post-Enlightenment intellectual environment or naturalistic world-view of the West, should not be imposed any more on Asian people who have a different epistemological framework. We will examine each critique in more detail.

Western Theology as Contextual Theology

Firstly, Western theology is perceived as the product of Western culture and history, successfully providing Western answers to Western questions. Being the product of Western culture, Western theology cannot be imported to Asian peoples (who have different questions) without any critical reflections first taking place on it.[6] Byung-Mu Ahn emphasises the de-westernisation of theology in Asia, particularly in Korea, because

[6] John R. Davis, *Poles Apart? Contextualizing the Gospel* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, I993), p. 13, observes that the irrelevancy of western theology arises from the fact that all theologies are by nature culturally-conditioned. Though he himself is a western missionary to Thailand, Davis expresses a strong negative opinion about the exportation of western theological books *en masse* to the non-Western world, which will be counter-productive. "Firstly, they perpetuate a Western world-view, Western values, and Western theological presuppositions. Secondly, such ventures relieve churches in other lands of the urgent priority to develop their own theologies. Thirdly, they unconsciously perpetuate an unacceptable theological imperialism." *Ibid*., p. 14.

he realised that "the Western theologies are the questions and answers projected in the historical situation of Western people."[7]

In his recent article, Archie C. C. Lee explains the irrelevance of Western theology by reflecting on a story that Confucius told to one of his disciples, Tzu Kung, as reported in the *Book of Chuang Tzu*. The story is about a marquis of a city who did his best to nourish a sea bird with food for humans only to kill it.[8] Lee reflects on the story and observes that "to nourish a sea-bird in a way which is completely alien to sea birds is against the nature of sea birds and therefore it will eventually bring death instead of life."[9] He holds that this tale enlightens us in our search for an Asian way of doing Christian theology. He compares what the marquis tried to give to the sea bird in the ancestral temple, with theology done in a foreign way. As the marquis, by giving the bird what nourishes man, eventually killed the bird, doing theology "using non-Asian texts, alienated from the Asian socio-political and cultural-historical contexts, disregarding the Asian experiences and despising without discrimination the richness of Asian spirituality" will bring about the same result for Asian peoples.[10] Western theology in this respect is a "super-imposed theology" that will enslave Asian minds and destroy creativity and the imagination of Asian people. Therefore, he concludes: "it is our rights and privilege to be fed by the nourishment infiltrated in our cultural-religious traditions."[11] The implication of Lee's reading of the story is very clear: Although

[7] Byung-Mu Ahn, "Christianity and Westernisation," *Gidokgyo Sasang* (Christian Thought) 12 (1971), p. 62.

[8] The story Lee cites in his article goes as follows: "Once a sea bird alighted in the suburbs of the Lu capital. The marquis of Lu escorted it to the ancestral temple, where he entertained it, performing the Nine Shao music for it to listen to and presenting it with the meat of the T'ai-lao sacrifice to feast on. But the bird only looked dazed and forlorn, refusing to eat a single slice of meat or drink a cup of wine, and in three days it was dead. This is to try to nourish a bird with what would nourish you instead of what would nourish a bird. If you want to nourish a bird with what nourished a bird, then you should let it roost in the deep forest, play among the banks and islands, float on the rivers and lakes, eat mudfish and minnows, follow the rest of the flock in flight and rest, and live anyway it chooses." See Archie C. C. Lee, "Prophetic and Sapiential Hermeneutics in Asian ways of doing theology," *Doing Christian Theology in Asian Ways*, ATESEA Occasional Papers No. 12, 1993, p. 1.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid*., p. 2.

Western theology nourishes Western people, it fails to do so for Asian people. Asian people need an Asian contextual theology that would nourish them.[12]

What is being questioned is the relevance of the content of Western theology. The products of Western theologians' academic reflections do not have universal validity and thus are not directly applicable to Asian realities. This critique has provided a platform for Asian theologians to utilise Asian resources in doing theology and to expand their perspectives to formulate contextually relevant theologies. Though this critique is not altogether wrong, however, we may question the validity of this critique for the following reasons. (1) We cannot deny the fact that Western theologies do provide valuable insights for Asian theologians. It is true that in most cases Western theologians do not use Asian resources for their theological reflections. But, it is true that Asian theologians still use them extensively to support their arguments. Regardless of their critique of Western theologies, Asian theologians have maintained their dialogue with Western theologians all along. (2) If Western theology is considered as a contextual theology, dealing with issues arising in the cultural and historical settings of the West, Asian theologians should at least learn how to formulate Asian contextual theology from their counterparts in the West.[13] (3) As we will examine below, there is no consensus among Asian theologians on whether or not Western theology is an inculturated theology. Drawing on these

[12] Apart from the main argument of Lee's reflection on the story, his use of the story seems ambiguous and rather confusing. First, Lee does not clarify who is to be identified with the sea-bird in Asian context. Arguing that Western theology "cuts *us* off from the life contexts and captivates *our* fellow Asians in the ancestral temple of another people," he seems to refer to both Asian theologians and people as being in the position of the sea-bird. [italics added] The same is observed in his statement that Western theology "enslaves the Asian minds and destroy *our* creativity and imagination." [italics added] If the sea-bird designates Asian theologians, who then is the marquis of the tale in the Asian context? If the food and drink provided for the sea-bird are compared to theology, it is none other than Asian theologians who provide meat and wine. Secondly, if we can identify the sea-bird with Asian people and the marquis with Asian theologians, Lee's criticism should be against both Asian theologians and Western theology. The quest for Asian ways of doing theology is then primarily the task of Asian theologians who have become homeless between Western theology and Asian people. Thirdly, based on the second observation, we find it difficult to accept the fate of the sea-bird in the Asian context. It seems more right to say that the religiosity of Asian people did not die, regardless of the failure of the Asian theologians to provide nourishment by being captivated in their academic world.

[13] It is quite intriguing to note that Archie Lee, in spite of his harsh criticism of Western theology, refers to Western theologians to support his argument. After emphasising that "the tale of the sea-bird will enlighten us in our doing Christian theology in Asian ways," Lee states only several lines below that James A. Sanders' study on true and false prophecy "will contribute to the understanding of our theological task in Asia." (p.2) Again, in support of his argument for sapiential hermeneutics, Lee refers to Western theologians like Donn F. Morgan, Samuel Terrien, and James Crenshaw, all of whom according to Lee illuminate Amos' use of popular wisdom to proclaim his message. (p.10).

observations, we may safely conclude that the Asian critique of Western theology as a contextual theology, i.e., as Western answers to Western questions, does not capture the characteristic of Western theology and provides an insufficient rationale for Asian theology.

Western Theology as Non-Contextual Theology

Secondly, Western theology is criticised for being irrelevant to Asian people because Western theology *itself* is alienated from the life of Western peoples. In other words, contrary to the first criticism, Western theology is criticised for its failure to be contextualised in the life-situations of Western people. Western theology deals only with intellectual concerns not related to the concrete life-situations of the people. Theology has become the business of professional theologians within their academic guild. Ahn Byung-Mu observes that Western theology is kept in the academic and abstract world. He states: "Reading theological books produced by Western theologians, I feel that for them theology *per se* has become the context of doing theology. In other words, they always refer to other theologians. They say, 'Barth said this and Bultmann said that', 'Bornkamm argued this and Tillich argued that' and so forth. Theology for them is characterised as a confrontation between words and/or between perspectives. These academic confrontations in turn create a context for doing theology. The academic world has become the context of theology, being alienated from the concrete realities."[14] Ahn further criticises Western theologians in that they want "to monopolise truth under the name of scientific researches and to build a thick and high wall between the world of theology and the life of the people."[15]

The *Seoul Declaration*, adopted at the Sixth Asia Theological Consultation which met in Seoul, August 23-31, 1982, well points out the nature of Western theology as non-contextual theology.

> The western approach to theology has deeply affected our understanding of the theological task. . . Western theology is by and large rationalistic, moulded by Western philosophies, preoccupied with intellectual concerns, especially those having to do with the relationship between faith and reason. All too often, it

[14] Ahn Byung-Mu, *Speaking on Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Han Gil Sa, 1993), p. 34.

[15] Ahn Byung-Mu, *Speaking on Minjung Theology*, p. 34.

> has reduced the Christian faith to abstract concepts which may have answered the questions of the past, but which fail to grapple with the issues of today.[16]

Even though we accept the partial validity of this critique, it is rather difficult to endorse fully this critique for this can be directed against only parts of Western theologies. There are not a few theologians in the West, particularly those in the area of Christian social ethics, who grapple with the practical problems that affect the very lives of the people. Even in the area of biblical studies, voices are heard calling for an ethos of public accountability of biblical scholarship.[17] In this respect, we may say that this critique cannot represent a true picture of Western theology and thus does not serve as a sufficient ground for the search of Asian theology

Western Theology as Naturalistic Theology

Thirdly, the character of Western theology is criticised for being naturalistic and rationalistic. Western theology is perceived as irrelevant to Asian people for it is fashioned in a different cultural and intellectual climate. It is argued that the cultural factors which have strongly affected the style of doing theology in the West are rationalism, logical positivism and historical relativism.[18] These are closely related to the post-Enlightenment Western world view, alien to Asians, which is quite rightly characterised as naturalistic and rationalistic. It is generally agreed that Western theology has been heavily influenced by this intellectual environment. Elizabeth Schussler-

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[16] "Seoul Declaration," in Bong Rin Ro & Ruth Eshenaur (eds.), *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts. An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, I984), p. 23.

[17] Cf. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 107/1 (1988), pp. 3-17. She called for an ethos of public accountability in biblical scholarship in her presidential address at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston in December 1987. It is worth quoting what she tried to bring home by surveying the previous SBL-presidential addresses: "[I]n the past forty years, no president of the SBL has used the opportunity of the presidential address for asking the membership to consider the political context of their scholarship and to reflect on its public accountability. Since 1947 no presidential address has explicitly reflected on world politics, global crises, human sufferings, or movements for change. Neither the civil rights movement nor the various liberation struggles of the so-called Third World, neither the assassination of Martin Luther King nor the Holocaust has become the rhetorical context for biblical studies. Biblical studies appear to have progressed in a political vacuum, and scholars seem to have understood themselves as accountable solely - as Robert Funk puts it - to the vested interests of the 'fraternity of scholarly trained scholars with the soul of a church'." (p. 9)

[18] Cf. Hwa Yung, *Mangoes and Bananas?* pp. 3-8.

Fiorenza refers to this intellectual climate that shaped the method of doing theology in the West as the 'scientist ethos'. She summarises this scientific ethos in the field of biblical scholarship as follows: "Apolitical detachment, objective literalism, and scientific value-neutrality are the rhetorical postures that seem to be dominant in the positivistic paradigm of biblical scholarship."[19] She calls for a paradigm shift in the ethos and public accountability of biblical scholarship as a positive alternative of Western theology.

Developed within this Western epistemological framework, the Western method of doing theology is characterised by its use of rational analysis. It seems true that Western theologians, both in evangelical and in ecumenical circles, are not free from this method of using rational analysis. However, it is wrong to assume that all Western theologies are subject to the naturalistic and rationalistic world view. There are Christian scholars of the West who reject the Biblical realities that do not fit into the so-called modern Western world view, but at the same time there are also theologians who accept and promulgate the biblical world view within the Western world. In this sense, it is not correct to refer to Western theology as having only one theological colour formulated within the post-Enlightenment epistemology.

Summary

The Asian critiques of Western theology are only partially right in that they fail to deliver a true picture of Western theology. Given the above observations, we may argue that it is not desirable or plausible to articulate the rationale for and style of Asian theology in reaction to Western theology. These critiques against Western theology cannot serve as an adequate basis for the construction of an Asian theology. Asian theologians, in both ecumenical and evangelical circles, have studied Western theologies, i.e., Western understandings of Christian teachings. Therefore, if we regard the imposition of Western understandings of Christianity on Asian people as spiritual colonisation, we are actually disclosing the impotence of Asian theologians who have failed to articulate independent Asian understandings. The criticism of Western theology is actually a criticism of Asian theologians and our theological impotence. An Asian

[19] Schussler-Fiorenza, *ibid*., p. 11.

theology can and should emerge out of our direct encounter with the Gospel in dealing with the social, cultural and religious experiences of Asian people.

II. Presence of Western Theology in Asia

In our attempt to articulate Asian theology, we need to refer to the wider theological environment in Asia. Whatever our challenges might be in renovating Christian theology in Asia, we cannot deny the fact that Western theology, delivered to Asian people with the Gospel by Western missionaries, has been securely placed in Asian settings. When Christianity was delivered to Asian peoples, we were given both the Bible, the Christian sacred book, and the various Western understandings of the Christian teaching. In a sense, the direct encounter between the Bible and the Asian people has been discouraged from the outset because of the presence of Western theologies.

It seems unlikely that this phenomenon will radically change in the future. A look at the theological curricula in schools in Asia will suffice to confirm this. In other words, we sense that, even in the face of continuous critique by Asian theologians against the irrelevance of Western theology, it seems practically implausible to delete or undo its presence and influence in Asia. At any rate, it is not possible or desirable to abandon Western theology wholesale in Asia. Asian theologians would have to maintain the dialogical relation with Western theologians and their critical academic reflections. However, we need to clarify the implications of the sustained presence of Western theology in Asia.

The challenge at a deeper level is whether we should use the old structure for our new theological articulation. A ready-made theology was delivered to Asian people and this discouraged local Christians from developing methods of doing theology with local resources. The curricula of the local theological schools have been shaped by sophisticated theologies with the departmental structures of biblical studies, ecclesiastical history, systematic theology, practical theology, missiology and so forth. This institutional shape of the theological curriculum has been transmitted to Asia as well as other parts of the non-Western world, and theological schools there still maintain such curricula. It has been predominantly the theologies of Western scholars that have been taught and studied at theological schools in Asia. The West has provided the teachers and sent the finished theological products to the non-Western world, where they have always

provided the consumers of theologies. This one-way traffic has naturally created an environment in which Asian Christians have been more than ready to listen to professional theologians from the West, but ignored the existence of local voices. Such a mentality is very much alive among many Asian theologians and their students. Here we have to point out that the professionalism of theologians has played a significant role in consolidating this phenomenon in Asia. Indigenous but foreign-educated theologians have formed a theological hierarchy within theological institutions and helped Western theology to maintain its dominant influence in Asia. Given the departmental structures in which the writings of Western theologians are encouraged to be read, Western theology has thrived. At the same time theological professionalism has skillfully excluded broader issues that have a direct bearing on the life of ordinary people from its professional purview. The theological products from the West continued to serve as models for most Asian theologians, and consequently the creativity and inventiveness inherent in the local cultures of Asia are not encouraged. The possibility for domestic theological production is structurally barred.

Therefore, we need to struggle with the question about the meaning of this quest for Asian theology under the heavy influence of such theological structures in Asia. At present, it is unclear where Asian theology can be located in the traditional curriculum of universities and seminaries in Asia as well as in the West. The construction of Asian theology must take this reality into account, for we are not attempting to add one more theological menu to the existing ones in Western theology. It will not be sufficient to present an exotic theology done with resources and perspectives that Western theologians cannot utilise. This theological environment demands of us that we determine whether we will seek Asian theology within the existing boundary of departmental professionalism as one form of contextual theology emerging in the non-Western world or as an independent theological discourse, which offers an alternative to that of Western theology.

What we need in Asia today is a direct encounter with the Gospel without the hermeneutical and theological lenses of Western theologies. The question is: how Asians would have formulated their understanding of the Christian truth if they had been left alone with the Bible without the imposition of various Western theologies? Although we may not be able to "undo" the influence of Western theologies, we should attempt to

articulate our own perception of the Christian truth through Asian eyes without being aided by the theological lenses provided by Western theology.

III. Rationale for an Asian Theology

We argued that the Asian critiques of Western theology we examined above do not serve as a proper basis for Asian theology. At the same time, we referred to the presence and sustained influence of Western theologies in Asia. Given this theological environment, where then can we find the rationale for Asian theology? The following two observations from within the Asian experiences of Christianity request a search for Asian theology.

Impotence of Western Theologies for Asian People

The validity of Western theologies has been questioned on the practical level by many theologians in Asia. Although practising Western theologies, not a few Asian theologians have become suspicious about the relevance of Western theologies to the Asian contexts and signaled warnings about the separation between theology and the people, emphasising that theologies should serve the people. However, Western theologies, both radical and evangelical, are considered to be irrelevant to the life of the Asian people. Asian theologians are, in some sense, forced to realise the irrelevance of Western theologies by the negative feed-back from many Asian ministers, the bearers of Western theologies, who have to encounter Asian people on the frontline. Asian ministers became discontent with Western theologies because they find those theologies ineffective to answer the questions that worry Asian people. What Asian ministers find is that Western theologies as they were taught at theological schools and seminaries are hardly preachable or teachable directly to their Asian audience. Thus they work out their own understanding of Christian teachings.[20] Asian theologians have responded to this phenomenon in two ways: (1) Some suggest that theological research as science should be differentiated from the practice of faith by Christians. (2) Others argue that the

[20] In connection with this, we note that even minjung theology is not readily accepted by ministers trained by minjung theologians. Ministers of minjung churches express the ineffectiveness of minjung theology in addressing to the questions that worry the people in their life-situations. We also note the phenomenon in Korea that the various theologies of contextualisation are not accepted but rejected by the majority of Korean theologians and the churches.

theological school is not a place where students are served with a ready-made meal but a place where they are equipped with the tool to catch fish. We cannot accept the first position because it justifies the separation between theology and life of the people. As to the second position, we question whether theological schools effectively equip their students with the ability for self-theologisation in the context of their encounter with the people.

Every theology has the character of a local theology, i.e., the product of a particular time and space in history. Western theologies reflect the questions and issues that Western theologians at particular time and locale have struggled with. In this sense, all theologies are contextual theologies. The womb of Asian theology is the Asian *hyunjang* (a Korean word for 'life sites') here and now. Asian theologians must theologise with the questions that arise in the concrete situations in Asia in an effort to present answers to the various problems that worry Asian people. If a theology is to be an authentically Asian theology, it should not be alienated from the life-situations of Asian people but must emerge from within the concrete historical contexts of Asian people. In his report of the second theological seminar-workshop on the theme of 'Doing Theology with Asian Folk Literature,' C. S. Song states concerning the character of Third World theology: "One of the common factors underlying Third World theology is the emphasis on people - men, women and children who love and hate, laugh and weep, dream and despair. Theology has at last located its subject!"[21] Song also asserts that everything that has to do with the life of people can and should be the subject of our theological concern, for theology divorced from the life and history of the people will die.[22] Therefore, the locus of doing theology in Asia must not be limited to academia, characterised by a mere exchange of ideas among scholars. The locus of doing theology is the place where we encounter the life of people. If we relocate the locus of doing theology from the secluded space of the academia to the life-situations of the people, we may face with a lot of practical questions, either individual or societal.

[21] C.S. Song, "Let us do Theology with Asian Resources," p. 205.

[22] C.S. Song, "Jesus Christ - The Life of the World - an Asian Meditation," *EAJT* 1 (1983), p. 20.

Awareness of Asian Folk Understanding of Christianity

In the Gospel-culture encounter in the Asian multi-religious context, the pre-existing belief systems and value systems of Asians affect their understanding of Christian truth. The Asian mind is not a *tabula rasa* on which the Christian teaching can be imprinted. As Asian people, receptors of the Gospel, have been nurtured by the traditional cultures for thousands of years, a reinterpretation of the Gospel occurs on the folk level. Ryu Tong-Shik, a Korean theologian, well explained this phenomenon: "When the Gospel as interpreted by missionaries is communicated to Korean people, there occurs a reinterpretation by Korean, receptors of the Gospel, because of their cultural situation and mind-set, and consequently a Korean understanding of the Gospel is formed."[23] Based on this observation, we can argue that the contextualisation of the Gospel already occurred on the folk level even before scholars began to discuss about contextualisation of Western theology in Asia.

What we discover in Asia today is the gap between the traditional Western theologies taught at theological schools and the Asian understandings of Christianity on the folk level. Although this phenomenon has been noticed by many theologians in Asia, its theological import has not been fully explored yet.[24] It is also unexlpored what kind of theological and practical answers were offered by church ministers for the *hyunjang* questions of the local people. In fact, what Asian audiences hear is, in most cases, not Western theologies *per se* but Western theologies understood/ interpreted by the local ministers.

Asian theologians are situated between Western theologies and the Asian understanding of Christian truth on the folk level. They are expected to play an active

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[23] Ryu Tong-Shik, *Deposits of korean Theology* (Seoul: Jeon Mang Sa, 1982), 13-14.

[24] It has been noted by Korean theologians that regardless of the content of theologies communicated to the Korean people what emerged is a shamanised Christianity. Cf. Song Ki-Deuk, "The Task, History and Prospect of Korean Theology," *Shinhak kwa Hyunjang* (Theology and Hyunjang) no. 2 (1992), p. 97. Yun Sung-Beom, a pioneer in the search for a Korean contextual theology, noted this phenomenon as early as in 1960s. He observes, "If the seed of the Gospel falls onto the soil of Shamanism, the Gospel will knowingly or unknowingly burgeon into a Shamanistic Christianity. . . Though we may normally call it Christianity, what we see is none other than a copy of Shamanistic religiosity or that of Buddhism, of Confucianism or of Taoism. . . Consequently, we see an obviously Shamanistic phenomenon in the Christian churches, but no one seems to care about such phenomenon and remains indifferent." See his *Kidokgyo wa Hanguk Sasang* (Christianity and the Korean Thought) (Seoul: Daehan Kidokgyo Sohoe, 1993, 10th edition), 99-100. By simply labelling what he observed as "bad contextualisation", Yun failed to explore further the theological implication of such phenomenon.

role in bridging the gap between them, for Asian understandings that emerge out of the encounter between the Gospel and Asian people can only be identified by insiders of Asian cultures. However, what we have seen is, contrary to our expectation, the alienation of Asian theologians from the folk understanding of Christian truth. Asian Christian ministers, who are situated between Western theologies and their people's questions, have struggled to make the Gospel relevant to Asian people but seldom assisted by Asian theologians. In this regard, we may say that it is not Western theologies but Asian theologians who have been irrelevant to the Asian soil. Therefore, Asian theologians, who delivered Western theologies to Asian people, stand homeless between the two poles: Western theologies and Asian people's understandings of Christianity. This awareness serves as the basis for an Asian theology.

The awareness of the persistent influence of the traditional cultures on Asian people has a significant bearing in our attempt to construct an independent Asian theological discourse. What we realise anew is the fact that the traditional cultural elements are not deleted but still sustained in the minds of Asian Christians. Asians already have various non-Christian concepts and ideas similar to those in Christianity. At the same time, the pre-Christian 'actual beliefs'[25] of Asian people operate in their minds as a hermeneutical filter that either hinders or facilitates their understanding of Christian teaching. The Shamanistic, Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist elements have formed the cultures of East Asia, nurturing the minds of East Asian people. Accordingly, Asian theologians who search for an Asian theology have to deal with their cultural experiences and explore the minds of Asian people in order to identify the cultural elements that affect their understanding of Christianity. In other words, we need to pay attention to the traditional cultures of Asia to find out those elements still alive in the minds of Asian Christians.

[25] The actual beliefs designate the same thing as what we call 'the cultural-religious consciousness' or 'the epistemological framework' of the Asian people.

IV. Identifying an Asian Style of Doing Theology

Asian Theology as Comprehensive Theology

If we find elements in our theological environment, inherited from the West and imposed on Asian people, which are alien to our cultural and religious experiences, we cannot bypass a thorough examination of the hardware in the theological environment of Asia. (In computing, some fundamental changes of software require a change of hardware or of configuration.) Then, what does it mean for us to seek an Asian theology in the existing institutional systems? We must emphasise again that the phenomenon of theological compartmentalisation with departmental specialisation is alien to the cultural experiences of Asian Christians. It may not always be a negative thing to maintain the departmental boundaries. However, such compartmentalisation of theology is hard to reconcile with the Asian religious sense. Traditionally, in Asia, an expert in religious learning and teaching was a person who had attained a comprehensive understanding of the religion. As Asian people have a certain understanding of the nature of religion in their history, such a folk understanding of religion should have a significant bearing on the way Christian teachings are presented to Asian peoples. In Asia religion is believed to provide a comprehensive system which enables us to perceive humanity, nature and the universe. In this religious milieu in Asia it is quite natural that Christian theologians are expected to offer comprehensive teachings on the Christian truth. However, what is transmitted at theological schools is 'compartmentalised theology' rather than 'comprehensive theology'. Professional theologians may confine their academic reflections within the departmental structure in which their theological specialisation is safeguarded. A comprehensive understanding of Christian teachings is not fostered in theological schools. This traditional practice of theology leaves little space in which to develop a methodology for 'comprehensive theology' with which Asian people, both Christians and non-Christians, have been familiar.

Methodological Reorientation for Asian Theology

Our quest for an Asian theology can begin with the rediscovery of the traditional methods of perceiving religious truth which, though neglected by Asian theologians, already existed in the culture and history of Asian peoples. We discredit the methodology

of Western theology based on logical and rational analysis because it disables our access to the fullness of Christian truth. It is not either possible or desirable to abandon logic and rationality, for these are important, though not sufficient, tools for us to use to comprehend and communicate Christian truth. Even when we point out the limitation of logic and rationality we face the dilemma that we cannot help using logic and rationality. In this sense, it is not sound at all for us to argue that logic and rationality are to be discarded in our theological methodology. However, the problem we detect in Western methodology is that many significant aspects of Christian truth are either ignored or suppressed in the name of logic and rationalism. What we rediscover through Asian eyes is the fact that there are realities and Christian teachings hard to get access only with logic and rationality.[26] We need to emphasise that logic and rationality are necessary but imperfect tools to help us comprehend the world, universe, humanity, nature and so forth. We are awakened to the fact that in Asia we have had other ways of comprehending and representing the realities beyond logic and rationalism. The perceived need for Asian methodology is closely linked with this discovery and awareness of our own cultural heritage.

A Cultural Definition of Theological Methodology

Theology is translated into "*shinhak*" in East Asian countries where Chinese characters are used, though the pronunciation may vary. *Shin*, meaning 'God', and *hak*, meaning learning, are literal translation of *theos* and *logia*. Even though *shinhak* is a translation of 'theology', our use of the term carries cultural baggage with it. As the translation (*shinhak*) cannot be the exact reflex of the original term (theology), there occurs an addition and expansion to the original meaning. The newly added meaning does not and cannot be deleted, but retains its own semantic range. In this regard, we should acknowledge the difference, as well as the similarity, between the two terms. The added semantic realm that does not overlap with the original term should be respected. It should not be ignored or abandoned, for this will help us to sharpen our theological sensitivity. We cannot be confined to the traditional semantic realm of the term

[26] Cf. Han Chul-Ha, "An Asian Critique of Western Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* Vol 7 Number 1 (April, 1983), pp. 34-47. He observes that the modern scientific worldview deprived modern man of 'the larger world beyond the visible world' which is a spiritual or supernatural world. He also criticises Western theologians for losing the spiritual dimension of man. (p. 39)

"theology". What we need to encourage is to define "*shinhak*" and highlight its difference from "theology".

The notion of '*hak*' denotes a very different method of academic reflection in Asia, and, because of the cultural and historical baggage behind this term, it is quite natural for Asian theologians who were born with this native culture to feel discontent with the Western style of doing theology. In this regard, we need to explore the traditional methods of learning.

The Western style of doing theology influenced by the post-Enlightenment Western intellectual climate dichotomises the subject of research from the object of learning. However, in the traditional way of doing *hak* or learning in Asia, no dichotomy between the subject and the object of learning occurs. Rather the researcher approaches the object of learning to internalise or personify what s/he gains from the process of learning. In other words, not a logical and rational analysis but an awakening and transformation of the knowing subject is the goal of learning.[27] The Asian method aims at achieving a unity between the subject and the object. As the goal of *hak* or learning is the internalisation or personification of the object of learning, we emphasise praxis as well as theoretical knowledge. Without orthopraxis, any awakening of the subject will end up with speculative knowledge. The characteristics of Asian *hak* are summarised as follows: the subject immerses into the object of learning, not to obtain theoretical knowledge but to internalise and personify the object through awakening and orthopraxis.[28]

If we develop an Asian style of doing theology based on the traditional notion of *hak*, we will be able to find a viable methodology. We cannot and should not eliminate the realm beyond logic and rationality from our theological discourse. We should not

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[27] Cf. Stanley J. Samartha, "The Asian Context: Sources and Trends," p. 41. He correctly describes the Asian cultural ethos in the pursuit of truth when he writes: "True knowledge is a transformation of the knowing subject. *Tarka* (logic) does not lead truth. It is the person whose mind is purified through discipline who can hear or see the Truth. . . no hermeneutics by itself will yield truth in its fullness without purification of the mind, transformation of the heart and discipline of the body." For a similar emphasis in the Western context, see also Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

[28] In connection with this Asian method of learning, we need to refer to the Asian concept of 'language'. In Asian *hak*, language has been considered as an insufficient means to perceive truth. There has been a suspicion of language as vehicle to contain truth. Therefore, Asian people did not give credit to logical and rational analysis. We find that the traditional Asian narratives are poetic and metaphorical. Although the logical and rational language has not been discarded, symbolic language has been more widely used to describe realities beyond logic and rational analysis.

propose that theologies in Asia be relegated to the realm where only expressions of personal and subjective convictions compete with each other. An Asian theological methodology requires an Asian logic to perceive the Christian truth, while not giving up the traditional logic and rationality altogether. The product of this type of theological engagement between the subject and the object will be new perceptions of the essence or fundamental principles of the Christian truth. The language that Asian theologians use to convey their perceptions should be the language of ordinary Asian people. The language of the ordinary people should be the reservoir for our theological words. Though having served as an efficient vessel to convey Christian truth, the theological language coined and used in Western theology cannot be exhaustive in describing Christian truth. Rather we find that the theological language imported from the West may impoverish our theological imagination and hamper our encounter with the Biblical realities.[29] In this sense, we need a new theological syntax and vocabulary to describe Christian truth that cannot be rationally explained. Only when the theological vocabulary is not separated from the language of the ordinary people will our theological reflections promote people's understanding. This is an Asian way to achieve objectivity: not through securing the semantic and syntactic logic of what you write but through gaining people's agreement to what you perceive.

Conclusion

The rationale for constructing an Asian theology comes from the awareness of the impotence of Western theologies for Asian peoples and also of the Asian folk understanding of Christian truth. Asian theologians have to deal with the cultural and religious experiences of Asian peoples, which have formed their epistemological framework. The "otherness" of Asian style of doing theology can be found in its methodology to perceive and comprehend Christian truth beyond logic and rationality. The traditional notion of *hak*, i.e., the way of learning, indicates that in Asia Christian

[29] We find a clear evidence of this in R. Bultmann's theology. Cf. His "New Testament and Theology," (1941) and "On the Problem of Demythologizing," (1952 and 1962). He proposed to demythologise the Bible for he found the mythological language of the Bible is incomprehensible to modern readers. His theology was an attempt to bridge the gap between the biblical language and the thought-world of modern readers. What we observe is that Bultmann lacked proper language to perceive the Biblical reality, using only the limited theological vocabulary supplied by the modern Western culture. We may argue that in this sense Bultmann is less qualified to perceive the Biblical realities than Asian people.

theology can have a slightly different configuration from the traditional 'theology'. If we succeed in renovating our methodology for Christian learning based on our cultural experiences, we will be able to present an Asian style of Christian learning.

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Re-Configuration of Western Theology in Asia

By Moonjang Lee

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Asian theologians have made various suggestions for de-westernization of theology in Asia. The critique of Western theology as irrelevant and reductionistic has served for the last three decades or so as rationale in the search for Asian theology. Regardless of the ongoing search for a viable Asian way of doing theology, it seems that a consensus was not reached among Asian theologians about the goals, tasks or methods of Asian theology. To elicit from the majority of Asian theologians a wide support to and participation in the creation of an alternative theological framework in Asia, we need to further articulate the character of Asian theology, which will serve to change the configuration of theological engagement in Asia.

It is not a new insight to say that there was a shift in the Christian centre of gravity from the West to the non-Western world during the 20th century, though the implication of this shift has not been fully grasped by Asian theologians as well as those in the West. Andrew Walls observes that the expansion of Christian faith in the world has been serial, not progressive[1] In this serial advance of Christianity, a previous center of Christian gravity became a periphery, and a periphery emerged as a new center. Walls further explains that the emergence of a new center of Christian gravity resulted from the crossing of Christianity across the cultural frontiers, which in turn allowed the formation of new ways to express the Christian faith.[2] He also anticipates that new forms of theology will emerge in the process of the encounter between the Gospel and the thought-world of the non-Western peoples, and even says that 'the future of Christian theology and of theological scholarship as a whole' depend on them.[3] At the same time, he does

[1] Andrew Walls, "Rethinking Mission: New Direction for a New Century," *Mission and Theology*, Vol. 8 (Fall, 2001), 257.

[2] Andrew Walls, "Culture and Coherence in Christian History," in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York: Orbis, 1996), 22-25.

[3] Andrew Walls, "In Quest of the Father of Mission Studies," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23 (1999), 104.

not fail to point out that the geographical expansion of Christianity in the last century was not accompanied by the expansion of theology that would represent a local understanding of Christianity and direct a new way of being a Christian. His observation is meant to highlight the current situation in which the theologies produced in the West dictate the goals, tasks and methods of Christian studies in the non-Western world, and to emphasize the necessity for local Christians to initiate a re-orientation of the way we conduct theological studies in locality. In this regard, we observe that there has been a continuing effort to "Asianize" the Gospel in the theological circles in Asia. Surveying the periodicals published by TTC for the first 40 years of its history, Scott Sunquist identified two recurring issues: 'the nature of theology' and 'the contextualization of theological education in Asia'.[4] Not a few Asian theologians have tackled these and related issues, and many articles and books were written in line with the search for Asian theology, showing the potentiality for serious theological reflections and scholarly contributions on the part of Asian theologians. What is intriguing, though, is that, in spite of the productivity of Asian theologians, 'the same issues resurfacing in the minds of students and lecturers through the decades'[5] are not settled yet but still discussed as live issues among some Asian scholars today. Moreover, the previous zeal of some Asian theologians who have pursued an independent theological discourse in Asia has noticeably weakened in the face of the negative reactions by the majority of Asian theologians from the mainline circles. Most of Asian theologians who opted for an Asian theology now tilted toward theology of religions or inter-faith/ inter-religious dialogue, buying the ideas of religious pluralism and thus damaging the very identity and integrity of Christian theology. This deviation from the sound search for an alternative theological framework in Asia is an undesirable development in that, by presenting a falsified image of Asian theology, it may play a counter-effective role by hindering the emergence of an authentic Asian theology. In this regard, I do not hesitate to describe the existing Asian theologies as pseudo-Asian, notwithstanding their academic achievement or quality.[6] An

[4] Scott Sunquist, "Light from the East on Early Theological Education," *Trinity Theological Journal* (May 1989), 26-27.

[5] Scott Sunquist, "Light from the East," 26.

[6] Cf. Moonjang Lee, "Theologizing in Asian Cultures," Unpublished paper presented at a seminar at Princeton Theological Seminary, New jersey, USA, in May 2001.

Asian theology that represents the ethos of Asian Christians has not emerged yet but is still in the making. The discussion on the goals, tasks and methods of Asian theology is not closed but quite open, requiring fresh insights. This paper is an attempt to add some more ingredients in our search for Asian theology.

Problems with Western Theology *Revisited*

Before we describe the current theological practices with their problems in Asia, we may need to pause for a moment to answer the question why the relevance of Western theology becomes problematic, whereas that of other sciences like history, sociology and linguistics is seldom questioned. Some attempts have been made to explain this discontentment with Western theology,[7] but let me elaborate on a few aspects from different angles. For a balanced approach to this issue, we need to underscore the positive contribution of Western theology and the danger of relying exclusively on Asian traditions.

We cannot deny or undo the existence of Western theology in Asia. Western theology is securely placed in the life of Asian Christians, and it should be admitted that Western theology has contributed significantly to the formation of Church life in Asia. Together with the delivery of Christian faith to Asia by Western missionaries, the transmission of Western theology was both natural and inevitable. The new converts in Asia needed guidance and instruction for a proper practice of the new religion from those who brought it. We may suppose that, if left alone without being introduced to those advanced Western theologies, Asian Christians might have appreciated the Gospel and expressed their understanding of Christian faith in their own way, but such a thing did not and could not happen. At the beginning of the Christian history in Asia, we needed theological insights and guidance from the West. Then what makes Asian theologians voice discontent with Western theology in the last few decades?

(1) The influx of Western theologies *en masse* suppresses the creativity of Asian Christians.

[7] For example, Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas ? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum, 1997), 1-9.

We cannot say that the influx of Western theology in itself necessarily harms the development of Asian theology. Rather, Western theology not only facilitates our understanding of Christian faith but also makes us aware of the strength and weakness of the traditional Asian methods for the studies of religious truth. However, the massive influx of Western theologies certainly plays a counter-productive role to the formation of Asian theology. Asian theologians became aware of the fact that the massive presence of Western theology reduced the role of Asian Christians as the creative subject in developing an Asian theology. While it is crucial for Asian Christians to acquire advanced theological knowledge from the West, they needed to build up the capacity and confidence to produce a local expression of the Christian faith. Non-Western Christianity never had a chance to develop a sense of self-confidence until the last two to three decades.

John R. Davis, a missionary to Thailand, rightly points out the negative influence of the massive exportation of western theological books to the non-Western world: "Firstly, they perpetuate a Western worldview, Western values, and Western theological presuppositions. Secondly, such ventures relieve churches in other lands of the urgent priority to develop their own theologies. Thirdly, they unconsciously perpetuate an unacceptable theological imperialism."[8]

As theologies produced in the West were transmitted to Asia before Asian Christians found a way to interact with the Gospel *from within* their own cultural and historical contexts, the felt-need or possibility to present a local understanding of Christian faith and to theologize on the everyday issues of Asian people became decreased. Asian Christians are expected to be the consumers of Western theologies.[9]

(2) Western methods for theological studies are imposed.

The massive presence of Western theologies resulted in the imposition of Western methods, not providing the room to develop an Asian style of doing theology. Asia has traditional methods for pursuing religious truth. However, Asian Christians were not

[8] John R. Davis, *Poles Apart ? Contextualizing the Gospel* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1993), 13.

[9] John S. Mbiti also makes a similar observation in the African context. See his, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church," in *Mission Trends No. 3. Third World Theologies*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 16-18.

given the chance to look for a way to utilize the traditional Asian methods in the Christian studies, nor they were aware of its possibility. They just learned and practiced the various methods ready-made in the West. The methods for theological studies we use today in Asia are not indigenous. They were not developed from within the history and culture of Asia, but imported from the West, outside of Asian intellectual milieu. Asian Christians have taken it for granted that they learn how to do theology from the West, copying the Western patterns of doing theology.

It is true to say that the acquisition of Western methods of doing theology has upgraded the way we study Christianity, but it is also true that it has deepened the methodological impoverishment of Asian Christianity. As it is well observed, theology is formed in the process of interacting with the particular questions of life in a particular society at a particular time. It follows that the transmission of a theology shaped in one region cannot be accompanied by the transmission of the original life situation that gave birth to the theology. Imported theologies, as particular answers to particular questions, do not render much help to those in different contexts with different questions. Nevertheless, by being required to learn Western theology with its methods, the thirst and hunger of Asian Christians for proper answers to the questions arising in their real life situations are not satisfied but largely ignored.

Another negative side of this massive presence of Western theologies is the monopoly of theological discourse by those theologians trained in the Western methods. As it is through the acquisition and mastery of Western methods that we become practitioners of theology, the operation of theological discourse is done by those trained in the Western style. In deciding the criteria for proper theological studies, it is not the facilitation of a creative interaction between Asian Christians and their life situations but the practice of the sophisticated methods to promote scholarship defined in the Western way. Thus it becomes necessary for Asian Christians to fulfill the formal academic requirements to reach the academic standard required by the Western scholarship. The cultivation of a creative ability to search for independent theological methods in Asia has necessarily become the secondary or tertiary concern for Asian Christians. Asian Christians were not only ready but also eager to be moulded into Western methods and therefore the standardization of theological practice is perpetuated.

(3) The goal of theological studies is not effectively achieved.

The critique of Western theology is largely due to the conflicting stances among Asian theologians regarding the nature, goals and tasks of theology. It is not always clear whether a theologian performs the theological studies either as an insider of Christian faith or as an outsider of it. We may say that in fact the question on the methods is only secondary to that of the identity of a theologian in his/her theological studies.

We can differentiate two approaches among theologians. One is to study theology as we study social sciences to acquire knowledge, and the other is to study theology as seeker of truth (求道者) or as practitioner (修行者) of Christianity. It is possible for an outsider of the Christian faith to carry out theological studies as a branch of sciences like history, sociology, linguistics, anthropology and so forth. In an extreme case in the current theological climate in the West, even an opponent or an antagonist to the Christian faith can act as an expert on Christian theology.

The limitation of the Western theology and its methods is acutely felt by seekers or practitioners of Christian faith when they are given no other options but the Western methods. It is because the Western methods for theological studies were not designed to serve the goals of seekers or practitioners of Christian faith, but to serve scientific, historical and positivistic researches. We may divide the Christian theologians into two groups: insiders of the Christian faith who do theological studies in a scientific way and those who pursue the theological studies as seekers or practitioners of faith. The existence of these two different interests or goals was not given a due attention, thus letting the tension between these two positions increase. This tension will not be eased unless there appears an alternative method for theological studies that would serve the goals of seekers or practitioners of the Christian faith. The Western methods for theological studies are built upon scientific and positivistic researches of the Western social sciences, serving as effective tools to amass objective knowledge rather than to back more practical goals. Therefore, the question of relevancy of Western theology will persist, and some Asian theologians will continue to attempt to re-define the goals, tasks and methods of Christian theology.

The search for an Asian theology does not need to return to the Asian traditional methods for religious studies. What matters now with Asian theologians is to restore the

ability and sensitivity to discern the discontinuity, as well as continuity, between Western theologies and Asian theology. Asian theologians must be able to utilize Western theologies through critical reflections. For that, we need to come up with a clear understanding of the character and function of Christian theology in Asian contexts.

The dual function of Western theology to harm and to contribute to the development of Asian theology will continue. However, if Asian theologians renew their awareness to the challenge and possibility to create Asian theology as an alternative to Western theology, and find a way to re-configure Western theologies in Asia, we will be able to minimize the negative influence of Western theologies and broaden the theological horizon of Asian theology. Thus the first step in the search for an Asian theology would be the constructive re-configuration of Western theologies in Asia. After that, we may further seek the possibility to articulate the goals, tasks and methods of Asian theology that will enable us to perceive the Christian truth in an Asian way, achieving the harmony between knowledge and practice. Asian theologians trained in Western theology are called for to be aware of the challenge to emerge as subjects of Asian theology, for they have the potentiality and responsibility to form a new theological culture in Asia.

Re-Configuration of Western Theology in Asia

As it is said above, we cannot undo or delete Western theology in Asia, but we can and should re-configure it to be in harmony with the ethos of Asian Christians and to be in contact with Asian realities. Western theology in Asia needs to be re-configured as a spiritual theology, a missiological theology and a non-dualistic theology.

(1) Spiritual Theology

Theology in Asia must be re-configured as spiritual theology. Spiritual theology refers to the re-orientation of the whole theology to focus on the spiritual dimension of the Christian faith. Simon Chan describes spiritual theology as ‘a way of training our minds to refocus on the truth so that the truth comes alive,’ seeking ‘a return to holistic

thinking.'[10] Unless theology becomes 'spiritual' in orientation, it cannot be a holistic theology. Theology in Asia cannot be studied and taught ignoring the spiritual aspect of the Christian thinking and practice.

However, given the scientific and positivistic foundation of Western theology, the phrase 'spiritual theology' may sound like an oxymoron to those who are in the Western critical scholarship. Within the Western intellectual history influenced by the Enlightenment, the line between the experiential world and the supernatural or spiritual world is sharply drawn, and any scientific research would not deal with the supernatural or spiritual world.[11]

Theological studies in the West were conducted using the methodologies of historiography, sociology, linguistics, literary criticism, psychology or anthropology. These methodologies borrowed from the social sciences were not designed to help the researches on themes related to the spiritual world. The problem is that the Christian truth is not and cannot be fully explained through scientific and positivistic methods. It does not mean that the scientific and positivistic methods are useless in the theological studies. As the Biblical text has the political, historical, religious, cultural contexts in it, and as Christianity as a religion is placed in a concrete historical, political and cultural context, theology needs assistance from the social scientific methods. However, theology is not identified with social sciences in that it includes supernatural or spiritual reality as well as historical one. The study of this supernatural or spiritual world requires hermeneutical engagement that goes beyond the positivistic and scientific analysis.

The predicament of Western theology is also observed in the fact that it became fragmented and compartmentalized into different departments. This fragmentation of theology is incongruous to the very nature of theology as a holistic hermeneutical exercise. As Chan observes, spiritual theology can offer an effective remedy to the fragmented theology by reintegrating the theological disciplines.[12]

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[10] Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000), 31.

[11] Cf. Paul Hiebert, "Spiritual warfare and worldview," *Global Missiology for the 21st Century. The Iguassu Dialogue*, Edited by William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 169. See also Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas ?* 3-8.

[12] Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 31, Footnote 38.

(2) Missiological Theology

Theology in Asia must be re-configured as missiological theology.[13] Paul Hiebert describes missiological theology as a theology taking our lives here and now seriously.[14] Missiological theology, according to Hiebert, "draws on systematic and biblical theologies to understand Scripture, but it must build the bridge that brings these truths into the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which the missionary serves."[15] Hiebert is interested in a rendezvous between the Gospel and our concrete life situations: "The task of the mission theologians is to communicate and apply the gospel to people living today, so that it transforms them and their cultures into what God wants them to be. Missiological theology seeks to bridge the gulf between biblical revelation given millennia ago and human contexts today."[16] Put this way, missiological theology in Asia will become an attempt to bridge between the Gospel and Asian cultures,[17] maintaining both the transcendental and the immanent elements in Asian theology.[18]

This re-orientation of theology as a missiological theology originates from the understanding of the character of theology as an attempt to provide a hermeneutical apparatus to facilitate the encounter between the Gospel and our historical and cultural contexts.[19] Theology must be related to the concrete reality of our life, and must penetrate into our real situations. In other words, theology must be incarnate in our contexts, providing insights and principles for Christian thinking and living, and also answering to the real issues arising in our life situations. In this sense, the re-direction of theology as missiological theology is also an attempt to rectify the alienation of theology from the real life situations.

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[13] Cf. Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas ?* 61-122 where he suggests re-orientation of theologies in Asia as missiological theology.

[14] Paul Hiebert, "Spiritual warfare and worldview," 167.

[15] Paul Hiebert, "Spiritual warfare and worldview," 167.

[16] Paul Hiebert, "Spiritual warfare and worldview," 167.

[17] Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas ?* 58, also emphasizes the harmony of the faithfulness to the text and the relevancy to the cultural context. Cf. Lamin Sanneh, "Gospel and Culture," in *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church*, 1990, 1-23.

[18] See, Simon Chan, "The Problem of Transcendence and Immanence in Asian Contextual Theology," *Trinity Theological Journal* 8, 1999, 5-18.

[19] Cf. Paul Hiebert, "Spiritual warfare and worldview," 164.

The alienation of theology from reality of life is taken seriously when the results of theological debates do not illuminate our reality nor exert positive influence upon our lives. It is from this respect that the captivity of theology in the ivory tower is critically reflected. What is wrong with theology done in the ivory tower? The placement of other branches of studies in the social sciences within the premises of the ivory tower as the hall of sciences does not cause any concern at all. Then, why does the ivory tower as the locus of doing theology become problematic? Again, it is because of the fact that the character and tasks of theology differ from those of other sciences in that theology must be converted to the principles of life in our historical and cultural contexts. The re-orienting theology as missiological theology in Asia will be another way to restore the vitality and validity of theology, thus making it a living theology with orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

(3) Non-Dualistic Theology

Theology in Asia must be re-configured as non-dualistic theology. Non-dualistic theology is a theology attempting to overcome the dichotomy between the subject of research and the object of learning.[20]

As we examined above, theological studies built upon the methods of social sciences cannot go beyond the scientific and positivistic studies. Consequently, Western theologies fail to explain the whole dimension, both historical and spiritual, of the Christian truth and cannot serve the goals of seekers or practitioners of Christian faith.

As the methods of the Western social sciences have been employed to the theological studies, we may utilize the traditional Asian way of learning for our theological engagement. Whereas the goal of Western scientific and positivistic studies is to 'objectivize' by keeping distance between the researcher and the object of research, that of Asian learning is to 'embody and personify' the object of learning through a non-dualistic engagement. Given that tradition of learning in Asia, theology must be re-directed to help Asian Christians to embody the Christian faith and to transform their lives. Theological studies need to be conducted not primarily to contribute to the existing

[20] Moonjang Lee, "Identifying an Asian Theology: A Methodological Quest," *Asia Journal of Theology* 13/2 (October, 1999), 270-271.

theological scholarship by participating in the academic debates but to achieve personal knowledge and awakening.

Conclusion

It has often been emphasized that theologization must be conducted 'in, from and for the church'.[21] This presupposes the possibility that theology can be done outside the church, alienated from the church life and against the Christian faith. Theologies can harm the church life by relativizing the identity/integrity of Christianity in Asia, and also suppress the vitality of the Christian faith by being captivated in a domain of speculation, defying the link with the historical and cultural contexts. We may say that, in the West, the development of theology as a scholarly enterprise was largely made outside the church. In turn, this separation of theology from the church caused not only the loss of *raison d'etre* of theology but also the decay of the church. In Asia, by re-configuring Western theology as a spiritual theology, a missiological theology and a non-dualistic theology, we will have to find an Asian way to theologize in, from and for the church and for the Christian faith community.

About the Author

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[21] Cf. Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 39.

Contextualization: To Know and Make Known God and Jesus Christ…Through Many Types of Logic

By Marlene Enns

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Abstract: Jesus is the best model of contextualization we have. This essay suggests that John 17 contains the report with recommendations he gave to his Father about his ministry of contextualization before going to the cross: "To know and make known God and Jesus Christ." An analysis of John 17 and a further comparison of its findings with cultural variations of reasoning seem to indicate that Jesus favored holistic and interpersonal ways of knowing without discarding other types of logic.

Introduction

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is often seen as the model for missions and contextualization. Several articles in this issue have already pointed in this direction. In this essay we will direct our attention especially to one passage, namely John 17.[1] It is the well known and oft-quoted passage in which Jesus prays with and for his disciples (and us) before he crosses the Kidron Valley and goes to an olive grove where he will be arrested.

This prayer starts with a statement and a request: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to *give eternal life* to all whom you have given him" (v.2).[2] Jesus then continues to define eternal life: "And this is eternal life, that they may *know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ*, whom you have sent" (v. 3). And he adds a comment about his "contextualization" assignment: "I glorified you on earth *by finishing the work* that you gave me to do" (v.4). After he reported, "I have finished *my part* to make you and

[1] It is not my intent to do an exegetical analysis of the passage. The reflections on John 17 are rather meant to probe a possible reading of the passage in light of what has been articulated about contextualization in this issue of the *CGJ*. Hopefully this essay can provide some food for further reflection and dialogue.

[2] When italics appear in quoted Bible passages, they are added. Unless otherwise indicated the New Revised Standard Version©1996 will be used.

myself known to the Twelve,"[3] he seems to be asking his Father to complete yet *his part* of the job: "So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (v.5). By asking this, he most likely is referring to his death and resurrection, picking up on the theme of his conversation with Nicodemus: "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (3: 14-15). Having set the stage, he then goes back to where he left off in verse 4 where he stated that he had completed the work, and gives a detailed report with recommendations of *his part* of the job (17: 6-26). At the end of the report, Jesus he is able to state that thus far the purpose of his "contextualization" assignment had been accomplished: ". . . I *know* you, and these *know* that you have sent me. I made your name *known* to them" (17: 25-26).

This is what we want to concentrate on in this essay: how did it come about that the disciples now *know* God and his Son Jesus Christ? What types of *logic* did Jesus use to *make* his Father and himself *known*? How will others come to *know* God and Jesus Christ through the disciples? What types of *logic* will be necessary? In order to answer these questions we will begin by examining the "Report and Recommendations" which Jesus gave to his Father before his death in John 17. Then we will review some basic facts about knowing and culture. Lastly, we will compare the findings of both sections and draw some conclusions and implications for ministries of contextualization.

Knowing God and Jesus Christ according to John 17

In order that the disciples (and their future disciples) know God and Jesus Christ, several interdependent dynamics were at play. Jesus himself had to be/do something in dependence upon his Father, the disciples had to respond in dependence upon the Father and the Son, and life-long teaching/learning/knowing had to follow. In what follows, insights from John 17 are connected with statements from other parts of the same book.

1. Jesus manifested God to the Twelve (17: 6, 26): "I have made your name *known* those who you gave me from the world." He brought God into view through his incarnation (1: 14, 18); thus making possible what was impossible through immediate knowledge (Schütz 1976, 404). After Jesus was baptized, two of John's disciples ask him

[3] At least the context seems to indicate that he is referring to the Twelve.

where he was staying, and he replied: "Come and see" (1: 38-39). They stayed with him that day, and it seemed to suffice to go and tell others: "We have found the Messiah" (1: 41), and invite them to come and find out as well. Towards the end of three years of being with people, Jesus said: "And whoever *sees* me *sees* him who sent me" (12: 45). When Philip asked him to show them the Father, he again insisted: "Whoever has *seen* me has *seen* the Father" (14: 9). In other words, the disciples' implicit responsibility was to be in his proximity in order to *look* and *see* with intentionality. As Jesus was about to face death he makes following recommendation: "Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may *be with me* where I am, to *see* my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (17: 24). This recommendation is accompanied by the promise of a further continued action of the Son ("life-long" teaching/learning/knowing): "Righteous Father . . . I made your name *known* to them, and I will *make it known*, so that the *love* with which you have loved me may be in them, and *I in them*" (17:25-26). The disciples *know* the invisible God through the *visible* Son so that a divine love/life transfusion may take place, i.e., that the love of the Father and the life of the Son dwell in the disciples and thereby they be able to *know* him! To know involves to *see* and to be in contact with *divine love* and *life*! It has *experiential* dimensions.

2. Jesus made evident that everything he has comes from God: "Now they know that *everything* you have given me is *from you*" (17: 7). On repeated occasions Jesus points people to his *works* as a source of certitude that he proceeds from God (5: 36; 10:25, 38). In fact, John tells the readers of his book, that the *signs* recorded in it are to help them to "*believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God," and that by believing they may have *life* in his name (20: 30-31). As he manifested God and his works, he showed the Father's as well as his own power and majesty (Aalen 1976, 404); i.e., he *glorified* him and thereby *was glorified* himself (17: 4, 10, see also 2: 11; 11: 4, 40). In this process of mutually glorifying each other, Jesus made it amply clear that he never sought glory from people (5: 41; 7: 18; 8: 50, 54). The disciples in turn needed to *believe* and be strengthened in their faith (17: 8; see also 2: 11; 11: 40). When people could not respond with faith, Jesus said that it was because they were seeking the glory of people (5: 44). The recommendation which accompanies the report is that God continue to *glorify* his Son (17: 1, 5), which in the context of the book is always referring to his death

(12: 16, 23-33; 13: 31, and later also to the death of Peter: Jo. 21: 19).[4] Knowing comes through *seeing* the *power of God at work* which elicits *trust/belief*. Knowing has *experiential* and *volitional* dimensions.

3. Jesus gave his disciples the glory which the Father had given him: "The *glory* that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be *one*, as we are *one*, I in them and you in me" (17: 22-23). This inter- and intra-oneness which is made possible through *received glory* has the following purpose: "so that the world may *know* that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (17: 23).[5] When did Jesus give them this glory which was supposed to empower them to be one and show the world that he loved them just as the Father has loved him? It is very likely that he was referring to what he said moments before when he told his disciples that they would do even greater things than he, that being in the Vine they would bring forth fruit (in the context it seems to refer especially to love), and that they could ask anything in his name for the glory of the Father (14: 10-14; 15: 7, 8, 16). In the context of John 14 and 15, the disciples' responsibility was to *believe* on the evidence of the miracles, to *have faith in Jesus*, to *remain in Christ, his love, his words*, to *bear much fruit*, to *obey* (especially the word/command about *loving one another as Jesus loved them*), and to *allow Christ to remain in them* (14: 11-14; 15: 1-15). This amazing generosity/love in *sharing glory* with the disciples is to be the source for knowing Jesus Christ (especially for the world)! Knowing has *divine, supernatural* and *volitional* dimensions.

4. Jesus gave them the words he received from the Father (17: 8, 14). Earlier in his book, John often referred to the fact, that Jesus did not speak of his *own accord* (12: 49) nor speak his *own words* (14: 10, 24), but only spoke the words which he *heard* from the Father (8: 26, 40; 15: 15), which the Father had *taught* him (8: 28), had *commanded* him (12: 49-50), and that which he had *seen* in the Father's presence (8: 38). The disciples in turn needed to *obey* (17: 6), *accept* and *believe* (17: 8) in order to *know*. Later, when Jesus no longer would physically be with them, he assumed that they would

[4] Glory which consists of demonstrating power and majesty is not sought by Jesus. When he asks to be glorified, he is asking for his death! To die is to glorify God!

[5] By giving his glory to the disciples, he indeed is demonstrating that he is not seeking hierarchical power and majesty, and thus eradicating any possible suspicion that he was seeking greatness. Having washed the disciples' feet just moments before, and setting this as an example for their way of relating to one another, was the practical example of this attitude (John 13).

continue with what he did, i.e., others will *believe* "through their *word*" (17: 20). The recommendation/petition he has for his Father in connection with the disciples being messengers is that "they may all *be one.* As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us . . ." (17: 20-21). The purpose of this dynamic oneness with one another and with the Father and the Son while they communicate the *message* is "so that the world may *believe* that you have sent me" (17: 20-21, see also 13: 34). To *believe* the *message*, and hence to know, has *personal cognitive/volitional* dimensions (hear, understand/obey) and *collective cognitive/affective* dimensions (is related to and dependent upon dynamic unity and love with the Father, the Son and one another).

5. Jesus protected the disciples and not one was lost, except "the one destined to be lost" (17: 12). This seemed to be related to *being with them*, since the recommendation which Jesus gives to his Father is that he continue *protecting* them when he will leave them (v. 11, 15), "so that they may be one, as we are one" (17: 11). To know necessitates *protecting* those who are in the process of knowing, i.e., it has an *affective* dimension.

6. Jesus prayed and continues to intercede for them and those who would believe (17: 9, 15, 20). Actually, knowing is related to *divine initiative*. It was God who had *given* Jesus those who were with him: ". . . since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom *you have given* him" (17: 2, also 17: 6, 9, 12, 24). This is stated as well in several other parts of the Gospel (e.g., 7: 37, 38, 44; 10. 29). To know God and Jesus Christ hinges on *divine intervention*; it has a *supernatural* dimension, and hence prayer is part of knowing.

7. Jesus *sent* his disciples into the world in a similar way as the Father had *sent him* (17: 18). Being *sent* is central in the book of John. When challenged or questioned, Jesus always invoked divine authority by stating that he was *sent* by his Father (John 5:30, 36, 37; 6:29, 38; 7:16, 29; 8:26, 29; 11:42; 12:44, 45, 49; 14:24). To be able to invoke "sendness" was to offer people enough validity so that they could *know* whether Jesus was or was not the Messiah. Hence, on the one hand, to be *sent* was an indicator for the disciples of who Jesus is; i.e., someone with similar authority as his *sending Father*, thus giving them—as well as the world to which they were *sent*—a source of *knowledge* about God and Jesus Christ. On the other hand, being *sent* also required that the disciples

be willing to *go*. To know is related with divine "sendness" and willingness to be sent; it has *supernatural* and *volitional* dimensions.

8. Jesus sanctified himself or had given himself totally to his Father (17: 19). That is why he could say that to see him equaled seeing the Father. Hence, Jesus recommends that the Father *sanctify them* by the truth, i.e., the word/logos (v. 17). Knowing cannot be separated from sanctification; it has e*thical/volitional* and *divine* dimensions.

Preliminary Summary about Knowing God and Jesus Christ According to John 17

The report and recommendation which Jesus gives to his Father in John 17 seems to suggest following aspects about knowing God and Jesus Christ:

1. Knowing comes through *seeing* human manifestations of the invisible God and coming in contact with *divine love* and *life*! It has *experiential/supernatural* dimensions.

2. Knowing comes through *seeing* the *power of God at work* which elicits *trust/belief*. It has *experiential* and *volitional* dimensions.

3. A source for knowing (especially for the world) is the Trinitarian oneness and love which is reflected in the community of disciples, because Jesus *has shared his glory and love* with those who follow him. Knowing has *divine* and *supernatural*, as well as *affective/volitional* dimensions.

4. Knowing is related to *hearing, understanding, and obeying* the *message*, and is related to and dependent upon dynamic unity and love with the Father, the Son and one another. It has *personal cognitive/volitional,* as well as *collective cognitive/affective* dimensions.

5. To know requires *protecting* those who are in the process of knowing. It has an *affective* dimension.

6. To know hinges on *divine intervention/initiative,* and presupposes intercessory prayer. It has a *supernatural* dimension.

7. To know is related with divine *"sendness"* (submission to authority) and willingness to be sent. It has *supernatural* and *volitional* dimensions.

8. Knowing cannot be separated from *sanctificatio*n; it has e*thical/volitional* and *divine* dimensions.

Knowing and Culture

Having inquired into special revelation (Bible), we also need to inquire into general revelation (sciences) in order to glean from it how people know. Given the nature and scope of this essay, we will limit our inquiry to some of the writings of missiologist and anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert, who has written extensively on contextualization, epistemology and its relationship with theology and missions (Hiebert 1991, 1999, 2008; Hiebert and Hiebert Meneses 1995; Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999), and some empirical research conducted by Nisbett and colleagues (Nisbett 2003; Nisbett et al. 2001). As we briefly consider various aspects of knowing and culture, it is recommendable to always keep in mind the findings about knowing God and Jesus Christ which we encountered while studying John 17—as well as what has been said in the previous articles in this issue of CGJ—and make mental comparisons between these and what the social sciences suggest about knowing.

Logic and Levels of Culture

Every culture decides what is important to be known, how it is to be known, and how the known is to be organized (epistemology). This of course, is intimately related to what the culture believes is real, exists and can be known (ontology), and what is valuable and worth to be known (axiology). These elements are part of the worldview of any given culture, and are the cause of cultural differences. Hence, it is natural—as the articles in this *CGJ* have indicated—that there are disagreements in theologizing. Hiebert adequately suggests that "disagreements in theology have less to do with the contents of theology than with its epistemic nature" (1999, 103). Theologies only belong to the *explicit* belief systems of a culture, and these in turn respond to much deeper, unseen, often unaware, and *implicit* structures of culture (which include epistemology and logics) as seen in figure 1 (Hiebert 2008, 33):

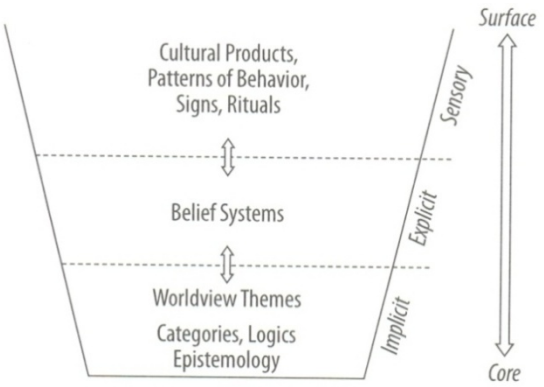

Figure 1: Levels of Culture

The implicit structures determine the explicit belief systems of culture, including theology. Two systems of cognition which recently have been object of empirical research are the systems of analytic and holistic cognition.

Analytic and Holistic Cognition

Nisbett and colleagues have developed a theoretical model in which they present two different systems of thought: analytic and holistic cognition. Their empirical research—conducted primarily among college students from European/American and East Asian populations—calls into question the long-held assumptions about 'basic' or universal cognitive processes such as categorization, inductive and deductive inference, as well as the appropriateness of the process-content distinction. They suggest that social organizations with their practices—such as those that reflect individualistic and collectivistic orientations—support and prime cognitive content and process in ways such that they are able to sustain socio-cognitive homeostatic systems for millennia. Analytic reasoning can be traced back to influences of ancient Greek and holistic reasoning to ancient Chinese social organizations and practices (Choi and Nisbett 2000; Nisbett 2003; Nisbett et al. 2001; Peng and Nisbett 1999). Figure 2 summarizes these two systems of cognition:

	ANALYTIC SYSTEM OF THOUGHT	**HOLISTIC SYSTEM OF THOUGHT**
Social system	Location of power is in the individual (personal freedom and absence of social constraint)	Location of power is in the expectations of the group (role fulfillment in a hierarchical system).
Social communication	Tradition of debate, argumentation, concern with certain and incontrovertible truth. Have strong convictions: win/loose.	Tradition of harmony. Confrontation and debate discouraged. Use of arbitration. Listen. Have less strong convictions: seek the "middle way".

	ANALYTIC SYSTEM OF THOUGHT	HOLISTIC SYSTEM OF THOUGHT
Metaphysics (attention)	- Life is consistent; *A* must be *A* regardless of the context. - Models of the world are simple and specific. - Attention given more to the salient target object. - See parts. Isolate and analyze an object while ignoring the field in which it is embedded.	- Life is changing; to be is not to be, and not to be is to be. - Models of the world are complex, interactional, and immune to contradiction. -Attention given more to the field. - See wholes. More able to detect co-variation (perception of relationships within the field).
Causality (metaphysical assumptions)	- Cause/effect relationships are linear and mechanical. - Explain events more with respect to a target object and its properties. - More prone to attribution error (attribute behavior to dispositions of the person, and minimize the role of situations and contexts).	- Cause/effect relationships are complex and difficult to be predicted/explained. - Explain events (social and physical) more with respect to the field. - More prone to hindsight bias (regard events as having been inevitable in retrospect; one knew all along that a given outcome was likely). Less surprise when an "outcome' is found not to be true.
Epistemology	- Truth and reality are logical. - Concern for inherent properties of the object of study, for categories and rules. - When asked to organize information, a person is likely to look for "common features" and to use "shared categories." Example: a pen and a pencil belong together, because both are used for writing. - Knowledge is based on formal logic and abstract principles	- Truth and reality are relational. - Concern for relationships among objects and events. - When asked to organize information, a person is likely to look for "contextual relationships" and to use "functional categories." Example: a pencil and a notebook belong together because a pencil is used to write in a notebook. -Knowledge is based on intuitive, instantaneous understanding through direct perception. Knowledge is experience based.
Cognitive process	- Based on formal abstract logic: law of identity, of non-contradiction, and of the excluded middle: "either/or". - Experience more epistemic curiosity, cognitive dissonance, and surprise. - Rely more on reasoning based on formal logic rules when evaluating the convincingness of an argument. - Categories and rules are the basis for grouping.	- Based on dialectical thinking: principle of change, of contradiction, and of relationship or holism: "both/and". - Experience less epistemic curiosity, cognitive dissonance, and surprise. - Rely more on prior beliefs and experience-based strategies when evaluating the convincingness of an argument. - Relationships are the basis for grouping.

Figure 2: Main Differences between Analytic and Holistic Systems of Thought

Both systems of thought have strengths and limitations.[6] Hence, Peng and Nisbett suggest that,

[6] For more details see Marlene Enns, 2005. 'Now I know in part': Holistic and analytic reasoning and their contribution to fuller knowing in theological education. *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, no. 3: 251-269.

> The logical ways of dealing with contradiction may be optimal for scientific exploration and the search for facts because of their aggressive, linear, and argumentative style. On the other hand, dialectical reasoning may be preferable for negotiating intelligently in complex social interactions (1999, 751).

It is quite obvious that analytic and holistic cognition use different logics. This does of course not mean that people from one or the other culture only use one particular type of logic.[7] Moreover, these are not the only types of logics.

Types of Logic

Hiebert mentions following types of logic (2008, 39-45):

1. Abstract, algorithmic logic: it is the one underlying most of the sciences. It is represented by the above mentioned analytic system of cognition, and uses the Aristotelian binary logic.

2. Analogical logic: it works with "fuzzy" or relational sets, which is not to be equated with imprecise or sloppy. Rather, it deals with higher levels of complexity and hence, challenges the Aristotelian binary logic.

3. Topological logic: it draws on the imagination and while examining new complex realities, compares them with those that are already known. It is foundational when forming categories.

4. Relational logic: it concentrates on relationships within the field. It is a type of logic which leads to concrete and functional ways forming categories. This type of logic is present in the system of holistic cognition which was considered earlier.

5. Evaluative logic or wisdom: according to this logic there is no simple formula that is able to produce the right results. It is based on "a profound understanding of the present situation and on past experience. Questions of truth, feelings, and values are taken into account, as well as the objective facts and subjective perceptions of the participants" (Hiebert 2008, 44). The logic of wisdom is often found in proverbs, parables, and riddles.

[7] In fact, Hong and colleagues emphasize that cultural knowledge is not to be compared to an overall mentality or "a contact lens that affects the individual's perceptions of visual stimuli all of the time" (2000, 709). Moreover, people may have several cultural "lenses" and switch back and forth between these. In other words, when bicultural people absorb a second culture, their original culture is not necessarily blended into nor replaced with the new one. In fact, they may have "internalized two cultures to the extent that both cultures are alive inside of them" (Hong et al. 2000, 710). Which one of them is activated and used can be determined by cues in the environment (Chiu et al. 2000; Hong et al. 2001).

Root Metaphors

Having briefly considered two systems of thought, and then mentioned other types of logic, it is helpful to summarize this section on knowing and culture with two root metaphors which are present in all cultures: organic and mechanic metaphors (Hiebert 2008, 42; Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999, 45-47). Figure 3 presents a comparative chart of the main elements of these root metaphors:

	ORGANIC METAPHOR	**MECHANIC METAPHOR**
Foundational analogy	Living beings, particularly human beings.	The machine, such as a watch, or, more recently, the electromagnetic field.
Definition of life and relationships	- Life is like a living being. Everything (gods, spirits, humans, animals, plants, earth) lives in relationship to one another. - Relationships are dialectic and homeostatic; there is balance and mutual contribution to the well-being of the whole.	- Life is like a machine. Everything is considered to be inanimate parts of greater mechanical systems, which are controlled by impersonal forces or impersonal laws of nature. - Relationships are mechanical and deterministic, since they are controlled by impersonal laws. Knowledge of laws is used to manipulate and control the system to own advantages
Nature of system	Relational and ethical in nature.	Formulaic, controlling, and amoral in nature.
Knowledge	- Interpersonal. - To know not only involves hermeneutical processes, but to understand the inside being of the other. - The knower is learning to know, to be known, and to relate to others	- Impersonal. - To know requires being outside the machine and studying it objectively. - The knower aims for detached knowledge about the studied object.
Concerns	- Value analogical or "fuzzy" logic, because the complexity of reality seldom can be reduced to right answers.[8] - Looks for underlying order, but is not formulaic in nature. - Uses qualitative analysis to discern order.	- Value algorithmic or propositional logic, since right answers are sought after. - Looks for formulas based on impersonal natural "laws." - Uses quantitative methods to test its hypotheses.

Figure 3: Main Characteristics of Organic and Mechanical Root Metaphors

[8] Hiebert reminds his readers that "Einstein noted, as far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality" (2008, 42)

As mentioned before, these root metaphors are present in all cultures. However, one or the other is valued more and hence makes for cultural variations of cognition. And since worldviews also are contested, Michel Foucault observes that "different groups in a society have vested interests in advancing those that privilege them" (summarized in Hiebert 2008, 48). This of course, does not only happen at the level of societies, but also at the level of churches, education (including theological education in all its modes), missions, and whenever any of these engage in contextualization efforts.

Concluding Remarks

How does that which we have briefly considered in the section about knowing and culture relate to what we have been suggesting about knowing and making known God and Jesus Christ according to John 17? Figure 4 presents a summary which may provide a summary overview of the first section (knowing in John 17).

Elements which enable to know	**Jesus' Contribution**	**Disciples' Contribution**	**The Father's Contribution**	**Dimensions involved in knowing**
1. God made visible	- Live a life which reflects the Father and which is visible to the disciples.	- Be in proximity of Jesus. - Look and see with intentionality	Make possible that disciples continue being with Jesus, since he wants to continue making himself known to them.	- Experiential
2. Evidence that everything comes from God	- Do works and signs given by the Father. - Glorify the Father	- Trust - Believe	Glorify the Son (through death and resurrection).	- Experiential - Volitional
3. Have the Father's glory	Give the disciples his name so that they may do even greater works than he, and ask the Father for anything, so that the world is able to know that he was sent by the Father and that they are loved by the Father in the same	- Believe on the evidence of miracles. - Have faith in Jesus. - Remain in Christ/his love/his words and allow Christ to remain in them. - Bear much	Make the disciples one, as Jesus is one with the Father.	- Divine - Supernatural - Volitional

Elements which enable to know	**Jesus' Contribution**	**Disciples' Contribution**	**The Father's Contribution**	**Dimensions involved in knowing**
	way as Jesus is loved. (John 14 and 15)	fruit. - Obey Jesus' commands. - Love one another. (John 14 and 15)		
4. Words received from the Father	Hear and see what the Father teaches and commands him to say.	- Obey - Accept - Believe	Make the disciples one with the Father and the Son, so that the world is able to know Jesus.	- Personal cognitive/volitional - Collective cognitive/affective
5. Protection from the evil	Be with the disciples	Be in proximity of Jesus	Protect the disciples so that they may be one.	- Affective
6. Intercessory prayer	- Pray for the disciples and those who will know him through them. - Give eternal life to those whom the Father gives	(Implicit: follow when called and receive eternal life)	(Implicit: continue giving disciples and doing his part)	- Supernatural - (Implicit: volitional)
7. Sendness into the world	Send them in a similar way as the Father sent him.	(Implicit: be willing to be sent)	Protect the disciples in the world.	- Supernatural - Affective - (Implicit: volitional)
8. Sanctification	Sanctify himself for the disciples	(Implicit: be sanctified by God)	Sanctify the disciples by the truth	- Divine - Ethical/volitional

Figure 4: To Know God and Jesus Christ According to John 17

This figure seems to suggest that the root metaphor which underlies the nature and process of knowing God and Jesus Christ in John 17 is organic, i.e., relational and interpersonal. In fact, Schmitz suggests that the Johannine use of the "ginosko" word-group, which emphasizes knowledge as a personal relationship between the one who knows and the one known, reflects the influence of the Old Testament concept "yada" (1976, 396-404). And when relating figure 4 to analytic and holistic cognition, it seems that knowing God and Jesus Christ tends to reflect the holistic thought system. Of course, this statement does not exclude the use of analytic cognition and of other types of logic.

Were we to read the whole Gospel of John and concentrate on "the words received from the Father" which Jesus communicated in conversations with individuals (Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman), or in arguments he had with the Pharisees we would realize that he in fact does use different logics.

However, as we think about "The church's mission in the world: Realities of contextualization," and continue the dialogue at different levels of ministry wherever we live and work, it is necessary that we be more aware of that which we use to reflect and think, namely our types of logic, since it will enable us to dialogue and minister in wiser ways. Moreover, it is necessary that we be reminded that contextualization is about knowing and making known God and Jesus Christ in broader and more holistic categories than we sometimes are used to. In fact, contextualization as described in John 17 aims at a life-encompassing and life-long way of relating holistically to God, to one another, and to oneself. May we too be able to report back to God at the end of our life as Jesus did: "I *know* you, and they *know* that you have sent me. I have made you *known* to them" (John 17: 25).

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Book Review: The New Paradigm in Ministry Education

By Bernard J. O'Connor

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Book Title: *The New Paradigm in Ministry Education*
Publisher: The Victoria Press (South Bend, IN, 2008)
Author: Dr. John H. Morgan[1]

After reading John H. Morgan's, *The New Paradigm in Ministry Education*, I recalled an episode from when I was fifteen years old, and once stranded at the Toronto International Airport. Bored by the long delay between flights, I decided to engage some fellow travelers in conversation. The lady who sat next to me in the waiting room seemed interesting. We chatted amiably. Just before our departure, I asked her: "And what is your line of work?" Smiling, she replied: "I am a specialist facilitator of interpersonal intimacy." Observing my look of bewilderment, she quickly clarified: "Oh, you sweet dumb thing, it means that I 'work' in a brothel, as a hooker!" Embarrassed, I responded: "Thank you. But I really wouldn't have been uncomfortable if you had simply said that in the first place." We laughed, and went our separate ways.

The six chapters of *The New Paradigm* probe beneath the veneer which camouflages so much of what academic institutions often try to persuade the public is their pristine and unblemished identity. The myth far outstretches the reality in many instances, with the unadorned truth being seldom evident "in the first place." Dr. Morgan's central thesis is that while those conventional educational institutions may still be entitled to their legitimacy, notably where undergraduates are concerned, those seeking a terminal degree as ministry professionals have needs and expectations which

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require a profound reevaluation of the familiar models. For the most part, those models no longer suffice.

The New Paradigm proposes, exactly as its subtitle states, to offer an alternative educational vision for that professional; one based upon "a radical philosophy of collaboration." Given the more than two decades of my service as a university professor and administrator, I believe that the book admirably achieves that aim. It represents more than a justification for the unique approach of the Graduate Theological Foundation (Indiana) and where Dr. Morgan has been President since 1982. What the book provides is a credible, practical, systematic and balanced defense of the inherent value of the ministry professional's accrued training and experience. Dr. Morgan advocates that that kind of record should permit the degree candidate a much greater direct involvement in designing and determining their 'terminal degree' program than is normally thought reasonable or acceptable. *The New Paradigm* is the only 'apologia' of which I am aware that has the courage to assert that an academic venue properly exists for the sake of the student and not vice versa as we are conditioned to presume is the only valid norm. It is not.

There is a prevalent view that the pursuit of University studies is a case of 'one size fits all'. In Chapter One, "The Problem," this misconception is addressed candidly. The typical "pro forma agenda" tends actually to be geared to the "symbols" associated with the image of academic respectability in the public eye. It is a milieu which often lacks even minimal awareness of what pertains to "the seasoned post-credentialed advance-degree professional." The preference is to expend institutional energies in the cultivation of a "beautiful campus", a well-stacked library, and a faculty renowned more for its publication record than for its passion to 'profess'. Dr. Morgan refers to this as a "cookie-cutter mentality," and which is as wasteful as it is absurd. Rather, the learning process ought to be "consumer-driven." I concur. I have been associated with universities where students seldom crossed the portals of their mega-library system (opting instead for internet-based research) and where the governing boards clamored to erect the most modern of sportsplex (usually poorly attended); pouring scads of money into mediocre athletic teams and leaving classroom facilities in nearly a decrepit state. Meanwhile, the Professors 'of record' seldom encountered those enrolled in their courses.

They were substituted by Graduate student-interns. Of course, tuition rates soared. Dr. Morgan properly refutes such an exaggerated and costly façade.

Chapter Two ("The Old Solutions") stresses the futility of handling "the same problems in the same manner with the same resources." For example, "compressed teaching by depressed faculty" is hardly a viable answer. Nor should a doctoral curriculum be a mere enlargement of "a bachelor's program." Sheer common sense suggests the wisdom of "having a faculty that serves as 'consulting colleagues' to the professional student," minus the absolutism of "demanding compliance with pre-set requirements."

"The New Solution" (Chapter Three) regards the "student as client rather than servant." It rejects the notions of learning contexts being "entirely self-contained" and the faculty being essentially "omniscient." Such "imperialistic subjugation" must concede before the "radical paradigm (…) of genuine multi-institutional collaboration." That paradigm promotes a broad educational portfolio from which the student has the "liberty" to select what best befits their career goals. The responsibility of the host institution thereby consists of "assessing objectively and fairly" the "integrity and credibility" of those institutions with which it is in formal relationship. The potential benefit for the student always remains of paramount importance. And the "professional veteran" has the right to expect that they will be "learning something new and helpful in (their) profession" (cf. Chapter Four, "Shifting a Paradigm in a Time of Transition"). In the "face of advancing technologies and global consciousness" we can no longer equate "physical books with education." As Dr. Morgan asserts: "Information is the key, not the medium in which it is found." Therefore, the student must be encouraged to "take the lead in identifying the places of learning" and where those are "not limited to a single campus or a single faculty."

The Graduate Theological Foundation applies the model proposed in the previous sixty pages. Over 2000 persons have completed doctoral studies with GTF since its inception 46 years ago. Some 375-400 students comprise the annual enrollment, of whom 40% are women and 15% are non-U.S. citizens. Chapter Five details the five "levels of inter-institutional affiliation" available to them, including; Partnering Resources in Ministry Education (P.R.I.M.E.), those which are Recognized and Endorsed (R&E) and Approved Venue Sites (AVS). These maintain their "own self-imposed

standards" to which "Foundation students must subscribe." But the range of course options is as extensive as those options are flexible and diverse. However, this does not mean that the Foundation sets a low-bar for its admission, quite the contrary. Masters Degrees necessitate a bona fide undergraduate degree plus five years of ministerial experience. Professional doctorates similarly require five years experience (plus a bachelors and Masters degree) as do the academic doctorates (acceptance additionally entails a professional doctorate). Overall costs are thus but a fraction of what is exacted on traditional campuses. Indeed, the Foundation is willing to further aid the student by offering them an interest-free loan. And the faculty's actual role in this "paradigm"? It is to maximize access by students. Besides numerous Tutorials and Independent Study opportunities, the faculty is committed to "the planning and development of new degree programs," the evaluation "of written work" (part of each educational venue) and "the supervision of theses and dissertations." Naturally, "the comfort level runs high" at the Foundation since its core thrust is empowerment. GTF's undergraduate division (Cloverdale College) ensures that those "without a bachelor's degree" are not excluded, but may select from a "Bachelor of Religious Education, Theology, Sacred Music, Mediation, Islamic Studies and Fine Arts."

The concluding Chapter (Six) treats the contentious issue of accreditation. I have heard objections to GTF framed as; "but the Foundation only has State Approval from Indiana, and so it should be ignored." This deduction is misleading. Why? Because, for example, the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges does not accredit where there is no "circulation library" or a "residential faculty." And the Association of Theological Schools does not accredit institutions that are "ecumenical and non-creedal" in their mission. Perhaps the time has come when GTF's next initiative might be to devise a new and "radical philosophy" of accreditation. There are many, like myself, who are confident that the Foundation is blessed by the prophetic insight sufficient to succeed …'in the first place'.

About the Author

Rev. Bernard J. O'Connor was appointed in 2004 to the Vatican's Congregation for Eastern Churches, with responsibility for the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches.

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