

## CONTENTS

Theme: *The Theology of Theological Education*

Introduction by Brian Edgar  
*page 195*

Dancing for God: Challenges Facing Theological  
Education Today  
MIROSLAV VOLF  
*page 197*

The Theology of Theological Education  
BRIAN EDGAR  
*page 208*

A Theology of Theological Education: Pedagogical  
Implications  
LARRY J. MCKINNEY  
*page 218*

Perspectives on Theological Education from the Old Testament  
M. DANIEL CARROLL R.  
*page 228*

Making Disciples and the Christian Faith  
SYLVIA WILKEY COLLINSON  
*page 240*

'Now I Know in Part': Holistic and Analytic Reasoning and  
their Contribution to Fuller Knowing in Theological Education  
MARLENE ENNS  
*page 251*

Theological Education in the Context of Socio-Economic  
Deprivation  
DIEUMEME NOELLISTE  
*page 270*

Book Reviews  
*page 284*

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 29, NO 3, July 2005

# Evangelical Review of Theology

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



Volume 29 No. 3 July 2005

# Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 29 · Number 3 · July 2005

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

Published by



**PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS**



**WEA**  
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

for  
WORLD EVANGELICAL  
ALLIANCE  
Theological Commission

ISSN: 0144-8153  
Volume 29 No. 3 July 2005

Copyright © 2005 World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission

**Editor**

David Parker

**Committee**

The Executive Committee of the WEA Theological Commission  
Dr Rolf Hille, Executive Chair

**Editorial Policy**

The articles in the Evangelical Review of Theology reflect the opinions of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Publisher.

**Manuscripts, reports and communications**  
should be addressed to the Editor and sent to Dr David Parker,  
17 Disraeli St, Indooroopilly, 4068, Qld, Australia

The Editors welcome recommendations of original or published articles or book reviews that relate to forthcoming issues for inclusion in the Review. Please send clear copies of details to the above address.

Email enquiries welcome: [dparker@pacific.net.au](mailto:dparker@pacific.net.au)  
Web site: [www.worldevangelical.org/tcpubs.html#ert](http://www.worldevangelical.org/tcpubs.html#ert)

Typeset by Profile, Culmdale, Rewe, Exeter, Devon EX5 4ES  
and Printed in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals,  
PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS  
by Polestar Wheatons Ltd., Exeter, Devon.

# Editorial: The Theology of Theological Education

ACCORDING TO THE *Manifesto* of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), 'Evangelical theological education as a whole today needs earnestly to pursue and recover a thorough-going theology of theological education. We must together take immediate and urgent steps to seek, elaborate and possess a biblically informed theological basis for our calling in theological education.'<sup>1</sup> This is the conviction which lies at the heart of this special issue. The specific initiative was the consultation on evangelical theological education organized by ICETE in August 2003 at the Wycliffe Centre, High Wycombe, UK, with the theme 'Mega-Shifts in Global Tertiary Education—and the Implications for Theological Education'.

At this consultation a joint ICETE and WEA Theological Commission track explored a Theology of Theological Education. It was co-chaired by Dr Larry McKinney (ICETE) and Dr Rolf Hille (WEATC). It was decided that the work done at the conference should be extended and then published for wider circulation through the pages of *Evangelical Review of Theology*. Some of the papers in this edition were presented at that conference, others have been commissioned since, and others were independently written. Together they

provide a good resource for theological educators to reflect on their own practices.

In the introductory article, 'Dancing for God: Evangelical Theological Education in Global Context', which was a keynote address at the conference, Miroslav Volf honestly faces the problems theologians and theological educators have in trusting and loving God. He reminds the reader that, while they may focus on students or educational processes, what comes first is 'dancing for God'. It is an evocative and helpful paper.

It is followed by two papers which focus specifically on the theology of theological education and which interact with the influential work of David H. Kelsey. The first is my own paper on 'The Theology of Theological Education' in which I systematically extend the typology presented in Kelsey's *Between Athens and Berlin: the theological debate* (Eerdmans, 1993). I have added 'Jerusalem' and 'Geneva' as missional and confessional types to Kelsey's original categories of 'Athens' (classical) and 'Berlin' (vocational). The aim is to provide a tool to analyse specific forms of theological education. Every theological education program can be mapped as a pure or mixed form of these types.

The second paper interacting with Kelsey is Larry McKinney's 'A Theology of Theological Education: pedagogical implications'. McKinney shows how theology affects not only the con-

---

1 [http://www.worldevangelical.org/icete\\_manifesto.html](http://www.worldevangelical.org/icete_manifesto.html)

tent of theological education but also the way teaching takes place (pedagogy). He helpfully and practically illustrates the way central theological themes (including relationships with God, the purpose of the Bible, the role of the Holy Spirit and human nature) should form the structure of education itself.

This idea is developed in the next two papers. In the illuminating 'Perspectives on Theological Education from the Old Testament' M. Daniel Carroll R. offers three different perspectives from Old Testament studies. Firstly, he shows how archaeological findings illuminate principles of theological education; secondly, how each major part of the Old Testament contributes distinctively; thirdly, the significance of Deuteronomy 6 for the mission of the church in theological education. This is followed by Sylvia Collinson's insightful paper on 'Making Disciples and the Christian Faith' in which she shows how a discipleship model, rather than a schooling model, is congruent with fundamental theological principles such as the centrality of God as Father, Son and Spirit. A discipleship model of theological education is, she argues, mandatory.

Theology and biblical studies in theological education are always found in contextualised forms. There has been a deliberate attempt in the commissioning of these papers to present multicultural perspectives on theological education. This comes not only through the different backgrounds of the authors, but is also presented explicitly in the final two papers dealing with personal and social contexts. In an exciting article, ' "Now I know in part." holistic and analytic reasoning

and their contribution to fuller knowing in theological education', which every teacher should read, Marlene Enns examines the way logic works in different cultures. Most formal education—including theological education—is built upon Greek analytic reasoning processes as though they are universal modes of thinking. Enns discusses a growing body of literature which suggests that it is not the case. Chinese or holistic reasoning processes are different. She shows how analytic and holistic reasoning processes complement one another, and if incorporated into intercultural theological education, could allow for fuller knowing and richer theology.

Finally, in many countries theological education is deeply affected by adverse socio-economic issues. In 'Theological Education in the Context of Socio-Economic Deprivation' Dieumeme Noelliste explores the need for the 'Southern church' to assuming supportive ownership of theological education on a greater scale than before, despite the economic difficulties; he also encourages the 'Northern church' to resist taking control and to be willing to come alongside the 'Southern church' to assist. His carefully argued article is firmly grounded in experience.

It is hoped that these seven papers will become a resource for those involved in theological education and a significant contribution towards enhancing the training which Christians receive. They deserve to be well read and discussed in theological education institutions and programs around the world.

**Brian Edgar**  
**Guest Editor**

# Dancing for God: Challenges Facing Theological Education Today

Miroslav Volf

**KEYWORDS:** *Globalization, contextualization, pedagogy, church, power, trust, love*

MY TOPIC THIS EVENING is 'Challenges facing theological education today'. There are many such challenges, some of which are unique to theological education and others which it shares with other educational efforts. Because of constraints on our time tonight and because of the expertise I bring to this task, I will limit myself to just one type of challenge. I will speak about *theological* challenges facing theological education today. In terms of the Program Conceptualization for this conference, I will undertake primarily to 'reground theological education in our shared biblical and theological commitments'.

## Challenges

Because I will concentrate on theological challenges I will say very little about some issues that concern many of you deeply. To start with the mundane, I will say nothing, for instance, about *financial* challenges, which I know must weigh heavily on your shoulders. How to put food on students' tables and pay electricity bills? Where will the money come from for faculty salaries, library books, computers, building maintenance, not to mention new programs and new facilities? How to survive financially in economically depressed times when the pressures of globalization are widening the gap between the rich and the poor—not just between nations, but also within them—and the churches find themselves, for the most part, among the poor.

I will also leave aside *institutional*

---

**Miroslav Volf** (Dr. theol, Tübingen) is Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology and Director of Yale Centre for Faith and Culture, Yale University Divinity School at Yale University Divinity School and Visiting Professor of Systematic Theology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Osijek, Croatia. He formerly taught at Fuller Theological Seminary and is the author of many articles and *Work in the Spirit* (OUP, 1991), *Exclusion and Embrace* (Abingdon 1996), and *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Eerdmans, 1998). This paper was originally delivered as the opening address at the ICETE International Consultation for Theological Educators, High Wycombe, UK in August, 2003. This corrected version has appeared in *The Bible and the Business of Life* edited by Simon Holt and Gordon Preece (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2004) pp. 132-146, and is used by permission.

challenges—an issue whose importance we Christians often grossly underestimate because of narrow definitions of spirituality. How do we create healthy patterns of relationships between people which contribute to their flourishing instead of sapping their energies and stifling their creativity? How to ensure institutional longevity, beyond the life-span of a charismatic founder or a particularly gifted visionary? How to rebuild trust and reignite enthusiasm after an institution has been mismanaged for years and its staff mistreated, all in the name of the demands of God's kingdom? How do we create workable and mutually beneficial cooperative links with other institutions nationally and internationally?

I will also say nothing about *contextual* challenges. 'Context' is a much used but knotty concept. For there are many contexts relevant for doing theology, and it is not easy to tell where one ends and another begins. The context to which I refer here is the cluster of processes grouped under the term globalization. How does the kind of knowledge demanded by the globalization processes—knowledge understood primarily as flexible technical know-how oriented toward innovation and the satisfaction of needs—relate to the kind of knowledge theological education has traditionally favoured—knowledge understood as wisdom drawn from sacred texts and oriented toward life in light of the world's ultimate future? How do we theologize at the interplay between local and global, where 'global' stands for the culture and institutions which are spreading from the economic centre toward the periphery and 'local' for the resis-

tances of periphery to the encroachments by the centre? How to do theology in a situation of increasing inequality of power and resources caused by unjust political and economic international relations?

One final item on the list of issues I will not address: *pedagogical* challenges facing theological education. Starting with the educational processes, to what extent is the mass-education model appropriate for theological education—whether that model is teacher or learner oriented—and to what extent should we work with an apprenticeship model? How to incorporate new technologies into our educational settings? In terms of educational goals, how do we motivate students to pursue with intellectual seriousness the love of God as well as the knowledge of God and God's ways with the world? How do we transmit a sense that God is a God not only of the big picture but also a God of details—a God who cares about the finest of the fine points of an argument because he is a God of truth, or a God who, as Lewis Smedes puts it in his recent spiritual memoir, likes 'elegant sentences and [is] offended by dangling modifiers'<sup>1</sup> because he is a God of beauty?

Beyond students' experience in college or seminary, how do we transmit habits that sustain a life-long intellectual exploration of the love and knowledge of God in service of God's world? How do we help students acquire a conviction that theology is done for an encompassing way of life rather than

---

1 Lewis Smedes, *My God and I. A Spiritual Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 56.

simply to satisfy intellectual curiosity, earn a living, or dazzle others with flashes of academic brilliance? How do we inculcate a sense that theology, like much of ancient philosophy, is itself a way of life—a life of love and knowledge of God—so that one is a theologian with one’s whole life and not just from 9-5?

### Theology

All these challenges—financial, institutional, contextual, and pedagogical—and many more, are the stuff of our daily lives as educators, and no responsible theological education can afford to disregard them. But there is a challenge that comes closer to the core of what we as *theological* educators are about. For the lack of better term, I’ll call it a *theological* challenge (by which I mean that it is ‘strictly theological’, for, given that theology concerns the whole way of life, financial, institutional, contextual, and pedagogical challenges are also theological in their own way). Put very simply, the challenge which I will explore concerns the place of God in theological education and, more broadly, in doing theology.

This has always been the most important challenge for a theology that claims to be Christian. The same holds true today in our global context. A powerful dynamic was unleashed by global market processes which makes, to quote Karl Marx’ *Communist Manifesto*, ‘everything that is solid melt into air’—whole ways of life are being permanently revolutionized, local customs undermined, established beliefs and practices swept aside, old hierarchies of wealth, power, and prestige torn down and new ones established

only to be quickly replaced by new ones again. The last thing theology needs is to be simply pulled into that dynamic, supporting it or opposing it or tweaking it in one or the other direction. Instead, theology needs a vantage point outside these processes so it can properly evaluate them and resist their tendency to enslave our whole lives by making us believe that ‘its all about money and power’. Unchecked, these processes will drain us of our proper humanity and ultimately destroy creation. Now as much as ever, theologians need to be reminded of the old adage: the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. And the main thing for theology is God.

By definition, theology is speech about God. I am familiar with the influential notion that theology is not speech about God but *speech about speech about God*. It is an analysis of the religious language which communities of faith use and practices in which they engage, proponents of this view claim. I disagree. I prefer to differentiate more sharply between religious studies and theology. Religious studies has as its object of study, among other things, religious communities’ speech about God; theology has God and God’s relation to the world as its object of study. Of course, God is not an item of this world, and we can study God only indirectly, through created realities like the ‘flesh’ of God’s Son or the ‘words’ of the prophets and apostles. Every good theology will, therefore, incorporate into its task a good deal of what religious studies is about: religious studies stops at the understanding of created realities; theology presses through them to the knowledge of God. Indeed, properly under-



stood, theology does not seek to understand God and God's relation to the world. Its goal is to foster love of God—creator, redeemer, and consummator of the world, the source of all truth, goodness, and beauty.

Examine, however, what most theologians and theological schools do and you would have never guessed that our primary concern was with God. Calvin's comment in the *Institutes of Christian Religion* about Christians' relation to 'heavenly immortality' easily applies to theologians' relation to God. He writes,

There is not one of us, indeed, who does not wish to seem throughout his life to aspire and strive after heavenly immortality.... But if you examine the plans, the efforts, the deeds, of anyone, there you will find nothing else but earth.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing else but earth—that is also what you will find in the plans, the efforts, and the deeds of most of us theologians, and that is so even if you disregard for a moment the kind of self-centredness in our work that we share with other human beings, and that makes us seek mainly ourselves and our own good in everything we do.

If we are of a more pious bent, the piece of 'earth' you will find in our activities will be called the *Christian church*. We work for its numerical growth and institutional development. In relation to outsiders, we defend the faith and shore up its plausibility; in relation to insiders, we offer a commu-

nal ideology, an interrelated set of claims which express our comprehensive self-understanding. If we are inclined toward social activism, the earth you will find in our activities is the wider world, graced with goodness, truth, and beauty or wrecked by injustice, deception, and violence. We celebrate the world's virtues as well as analyse the causes of the world's woes and heal its wounds in the light of God's purposes with the world.

As 'church theologians' we serve ecclesiastical communities; as 'public theologians' we serve political communities—and God gets left out of the picture, more or less. We do make references to God. We even claim that we are guided by God's designs for the church and the world. But often, it does not take even a mind trained in the school of the great masters of suspicion—Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud—to notice that we use God to achieve our own ecclesiastical or political ends rather than aligning these ends with the purposes of the Master of the Universe. A careful look at what we do, will show that we even—oh, the mother of all absurdities!—try to craft the Crafter of all reality better to serve the ends we have in mind.

In an age so obsessed with 'making' and 'producing,' the greatest challenge for theologians and theological educators, is to keep God at the centre of what we do. If we succeed here, we'll succeed, even if our efforts get stifled by lack of funds, obstructed by inadequate pedagogy or lack of sensitivity to context, and marred by faulty institutions and warped institutional cultures. If we fail here, we'll fail utterly, no matter how brilliantly we do as fund-rais-

---

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, transl. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 3. 9. 1.

ers, institution-builders, cultural analysts, and teachers. Why? Some ten years ago, my own theological teacher, Professor Juergen Moltmann, gave as good a reason as one can give in the opening lines of his key-note address before American Academy of Religion: 'It is simple, but true, to say that theology has only one, single problem: *God*. We are theologians for the sake of God. God is our dignity. God is our agony. God is our hope.'<sup>3</sup> We theologians are either like Moses, ascending Mount Sinai to meet with God so he can speak of God and God's designs for the world, or we are no theologians at all!

But what does it mean to keep God at the centre of our efforts? Let me explore one answer by examining the central theological categories of 'trust' and 'love' and linking them to God. Before I start, two explanatory remarks are in order. First, I will begin 'with a piece of earth'—*human* trust and *human* love. My purpose, however, is to use them to focus our attention on God, their ultimate object. Second, I will start with *failures* of trust and love. This may suggest that we can know what proper objects of trust and love are by examining the point where trust and love break down. But that is not so. Under certain conditions, negatives can prepare us for the positive; in and of themselves they do not lead to it, however. We understand failures of trust and love adequately only when we know their proper object—which takes us back to the centrality of God in our lives as persons of faith and theologians.

## Trust and Love

What do we trust? In what do we believe? My question is not, 'What do we *say* that we trust?' Most of us will blurt out the right answer without much thinking: we trust God. My question is rather, 'What do we *actually* trust?' The answer seems to be the same today as it was centuries ago in the time of the great Church father Augustine. We trust in power. Individually and collectively we seek to amass and demonstrate power, because power seems to open all doors. In the *City of God*, Augustine called this desire *libido dominandi*—lust to dominate, and noted that the city of this world, which 'aims at dominion' and 'holds nations in enslavement', is itself 'dominated by that very lust of dominion'.<sup>4</sup>

When one is captive to power, one manipulates and exploits, and the victims are the powerless—the poor, the old, and the very young, the unborn. Augustine believed that the lust to dominate is the main characteristic not only of the earthly city but also of its ruler, Satan. In the treatise on the Trinity he wrote,

The essential flaw of the devil's perversion made him a lover of power and a deserter and assailant of justice, which means that men imitate him all the more thoroughly the more they neglect or even detest justice and studiously devote themselves to power, rejoicing at the possession of it or inflamed with the desire for it.<sup>5</sup>

What do we desire? What do we

3 Juergen Moltmann, *Theology and the Future of the Modern World* (Pittsburgh: ATS, 1995), p. 1.

4 Augustine, *de civitate*, 1.P.

5 Augustine, *de trinitate*, 13.17

*love*? Again, my question is not, 'What do we *say* that we love?' If asked, we'd recite the great commandment: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself' (Luke 10:27), implying that this is, more or less, what we do or at least strive to do. My question rather is 'What do we *actually* love?' We live in a culture that above all desires to possess. Possessions offer power and promise happiness. And yet by pursuing the desire for possessions we find ourselves caught in a futile and melancholy squirrel wheel: the faster we run to acquire more, the faster the wheel is turning and the desired end—happiness—remains out of reach. We do amass more and more possessions. But possessions, no matter how many we have and how posh they are, never give happiness; they are like children's toys—interesting while they are new.

Some of us refuse to run in the squirrel wheel and desire to give ourselves to others without holding back. We find fulfilment in loving others—a child, a lover, a community. Like Margarete in Soren Kierkegaard's retelling of the story of Faust, we feel that we love adequately only when we achieve that state of selflessness of which religious thinkers, philosophers, and poets so eloquently speak, and 'completely disappear' in the beloved.<sup>6</sup> And

yet, in our sober moments we hesitate, knowing well that disappointment is inevitable and that we will end up squandering ourselves. So we oscillate between calculating and holding back on the one hand and abandoning all measure to give ourselves completely on the other. In the first case we are left with a gaping hole of unfulfilment as we find ourselves alone in our world of self-centred calculations. In the second case, we risk an unbearable contradiction in our very identity because that to which we have given ourselves completely can at any time be yanked away from us.

Most of our society's problems—from economy and politics to academy, from religion and family to friendship and courtship—are traceable to *misplaced faith* and *misplaced love*. From the corporate executive who seeks her own wealth at the expense of employees, clients, and shareholders, to the professor who fabricates findings in pursuit of the influence and prestige that come with academic acclaim, to the church leader who chooses the security of silence over the risk of calling a colleague to account for his offences, to a lover pained by the loss of what was to her dearer than the very self—so many of the problems that trouble us as persons, communities, and nations stem from our trusting power and desiring either to acquire or to give ourselves to finite things.

### Trusting God

At the heart of what Christian faith is all about are two revolutions: a revolution of trust and a revolution of love. The core of the Christian calling is to make *God* the object of our faith and

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, ed. and transl. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 1,167-215; Iris Murdoch, *The Black Prince* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1973), pp. 192-136.

love—not just to *profess* that God is the object of our trust and love, as the correct ‘Sunday School’ answer, but to order our lives around trusting and loving God.

When we trust *God* rather than power we will place the exercise of power in proper relation to justice, so that power serves justice rather than justice being sacrificed to power. We will find the motivation and strength to prefer losing power by doing what is right to possessing power by doing what is wrong. To trust simply in power, I have suggested earlier by quoting Augustine, is satanic. This is not to say that power as such is evil, but that it must be subordinated to the God of justice, in whom we ultimately place our trust. Will we ourselves suffer injustice if we give precedence to justice over power? We might, but *God*, who is not only just but also all-powerful, will ultimately guarantee that justice will be done to those who do right. *God* will not let the perpetrator eternally triumph over the victim who would rather be wronged than do wrong.

When we love *God* rather than possessions, we will place possession of goods in proper relation to love of neighbour. To love possession, I have suggested with the image of the squirrel wheel, is futile and melancholy. This is not to say that possessions as such are evil, so that we all should simply give away everything we have or continue to possess it with bad conscience. Instead, we are called to share with our neighbours, because we are created by God who is love and we worship God who is love. We are made for love and therefore we find happiness when we love, even to the point of sacrificing our

goods and our lives for others.

Love of neighbour cannot stand on its own, however, untied to love of God. For if love of neighbour excludes God it will either cancel itself by turning into selfishness (if we are calculating) or it will destroy us (if we deliver ourselves to the mercy of the finite and therefore inherently unreliable objects of our love). The only way to ensure that we will not lose our very selves if we give ourselves in love to others is if our love for the other passes through God, if we, as Augustine put it succinctly and profoundly, love and enjoy the other *in God*. Listen to what Kierkegaard, a deeply Christian 19th century philosopher, has to say about the matter:

No, the one who in love forgets himself, forgets his suffering, in order to think of someone else’s, [the one who] forgets all his misery in order to think of someone else’s, [the one who] forgets what he himself loses in order lovingly to bear in mind someone else’s loss, forgets his advantage in order lovingly to think of someone else’s—truly, such a person is not forgotten. There is one who is thinking about him: God in heaven. Or love is thinking about him. God is Love, and when a person out of love forgets himself, how then would God forget him! No, while the one who loves forgets himself and thinks of the other person, God is thinking of the one who loves. The self-lover is busy; he shouts and makes a big noise and stands on his rights in order to make sure he is not forgotten—and yet he is forgotten. But the one who loves, who forgets himself, is recollected by love. There is One who is

thinking of him, and that is why the one who loves receives what he gives.<sup>7</sup>

From one angle, the main goal of theology is to be a guardian of human trust and desire. First, theology needs to make plausible that God is the proper object of human trust and love. Theologians need to show how and why it is that if we trust and desire God we will find both personal fulfillment and be a source of blessing to communities, institutions, and eco-systems around us. Second, theology must undertake a critique of misplaced trust and desire. Theologians need to show how and why it is that if we trust in power and desire either simply to acquire finite things or to lose ourselves in them, we and the communities, institutions, and eco-systems around us will be the losers.

### Pressures

Our failure as theologians to keep God in the centre of our work may be but a consequence of our lack of trust in God and love of God. Though we readily affirm that God is the source of all good and that therefore trust in God and love of God are alone wholly salutary stances of human beings, we don't quite believe our own words.

As theologians we find it hard to *trust* God. At the experiential level, God has a habit of not showing up when we need God the most. We place trust in God, and God lets us down—our child is killed by the negligence of persons

who befriended him (as my brother, Daniel, was killed at the tender age of five), we are mistreated by our employer when we are most vulnerable, our small community, placed at the intersection of greater powers' clashing interests, gets run over, all the while those who don't believe in God, let alone trust in God, prosper and thrive. God, as Professor Moltmann put it in a speech from which I already quoted, is not only a theologian's dignity and hope; God is also a theologian's 'agony.'

Pressures not to trust God come from the academic culture in which we work as well. The cultural elite—especially in the modern West—has, on the whole, not been friendly toward religion. In a recent text about theology as a discipline, philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff has noted four prevalent attitudes, not always consistent with each other, toward religion in the contemporary culture. 'Religion is withering away, religion is causally inert, religion is coercive, religious belief is irrational: those have been dominant themes in how the cultural elite in the modern West has thought about religion.'<sup>8</sup> As it happens, these attitudes toward religion are increasingly called into question, even in the academic high culture of the West. And yet their detrimental effects on theology continue unabated.

Both our experiences with God and the attitudes toward religion of our non-Christian academic colleagues have made some of us hesitate to place

7 Soeren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. and transl. Howard Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), p. 281.

8 Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'To Theologians: From One Who Cares About Theology but is not One of You', 5.

God in the centre of our efforts. More ‘conservative’ ones among us have retreated into the fortresses built with the hard stone of rigid orthodoxy. Fundamentalist parrots that we sometimes are, we act as if just repeating old formulas will make them true and somehow alive. More ‘liberal’ ones among us have tied their fortunes to what is fashionable in academic circles. We have become ersatz philosophers, ersatz cultural critics, ersatz sociologists, ersatz psychologists, ersatz whatever, hoping that giving a bit of religious garnish to the dishes prepared perfectly well with secular ingredients will somehow make our work relevant. As fundamentalist parrots or ersatz intellectuals, we have kept at arms length the unpredictable and sometimes terrifying living God who alone is the source of all good—and made ourselves *as theologians* pretty much inconsequential. Even more, these strategies are self-destructive: as dogmatic parrots we are agents of our faith’s self-banalization; as ersatz intellectuals, we are agents of its self-secularization. In either case, we have robbed the Christian faith of its power and relevance.

### Loving God

As theologians, we find it hard to *love* God. You can tell whom a person loves by examining whom she seeks to please and with whom she spends time.

Whom do we theologians seek to please? You may think that theologians of all people would seek to please God. After all, our object of study is the living God, creator, redeemer, and consummator of the world. It should mat-

ter to us more than anything else what God might think of our work. And yet, more often than not as we speak or write we think to ourselves: ‘What will our colleagues say? How will this or that interest group react? How spirited or how long will the applause be? How will our book do on amazon.com rankings list? Will it get this or that award (preferably the cash-loaded Grawemeyer award!)?’ We speak and write to get approval from an audience, to impress reviewers, to satisfy ‘customers’. As it says in the Good Book of false teachers, we are tickling the ears of our hearers (2 Timothy 4:3). Popularity and its rewards take precedence over God’s delight. If we continue down this path, we’ll soon be theologizing the way some elected officials govern in western democracies: by polling religious preferences of our constituencies.

With whom do we as theologians spend our time? Do we take time to extricate ourselves from the hustle and bustle of everyday life—academic and otherwise—and meditate on God, aided by Scripture and the great spiritual masters of our tradition? To be personal, I find it hard to create a space untouched by the demands of my theological career and other responsibilities to attend to the One in whom I ‘live and move and have my being’ (Acts 17:28) and for whose sake I claim to be a theologian. Surely this must be foolishness, on par with any other we could imagine!

In *The View from the Tower* Theodore Ziolkowski has explored the significance of towers in the life and work of Yates, Jeffers, Rilke and Jung. All four built or retreated shortly after World War I into towers ‘that were conspicu-

ously spiritual refuges.<sup>9</sup> For them 'tower' was both an antimodernist image and a micro-ecology in which to pursue 'the opposition to urban technological world of modernism'.<sup>10</sup> As theologians, we need not follow their antimodernist stance, as if modernity were a particularly odious epoch in the history of humanity. But we should follow them into towers.

Every theologian should have a 'tower,' a space slightly above the world (or, if one prefers to think in temporal terms, a time to pursue non-contemporaneity). True, towers have their own dangers and temptations. But a long religious tradition has associated spatial elevation with the presence of God and with visions of unity of heaven and earth, destroyed by the Fall to the detriment of the earth. Jesus wasn't only taken to the high mountain by the Tempter; he went also to the mountain top to hear the divine voice and be transfigured. In our age, still way too modern age, some might see such withdrawals from the world in order to encounter God as a sign of religious lunacy. For, as Peter Sloterdijk has put it, 'modernity is an age in which nothing but the world may be the case'.<sup>11</sup> But theology will lose its soul if theologians neither get transfigured in God's presence nor gain a glimpse of some future unity of heaven and earth.

---

9 Theodore Ziolkowski, *The View from the Tower. Origins of an Antimodernist Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 155.

10 Ziolkowski, *The View from the Tower* p. xiii.

11 Peter Sloterdijk, *Weltfremdheit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 106.

### Dancing for God

In an interview about her movie *Frida*—a movie about indomitability, courage, and sadness in the life of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo—its director, Julie Taymor, told a story about her visit to Bali many years ago, as a young artist. One day she was alone in a secluded wooded area at the edge of a clearing, quietly listening to the distant music of native celebrations. Suddenly there stepped onto the clearing thirty to forty old men dressed in the full splendour of warrior costumes with spears in their hands, and started to dance. Nobody else was around, and, hidden by the deep shadows of ancient trees, she could observe them dance for what seemed an eternity. Suddenly she had an epiphany of sorts. She puts it this way:

... they danced to—nobody. They were performing for God ... They did not care if someone was paying for tickets, writing reviews, they did not care if an audience was watching, they did it from the inside to the outside and from the outside in, and that profoundly moved me...

To Taymor, these dancing warriors became symbols of non-commercialized art guided primarily by the artist's inner vision rather than being captive to the sensibilities of its potential audiences. To her, they stood for authenticity, unspoiled by the desire for popularity. To me, they became symbols of theology undertaken above all for the sake of God and an indictment against theologians who play for an audience rather than primarily dancing for God.

But doesn't 'dancing for God' sound too pious, even for theologians? More

importantly, doesn't it bespeak a basic mistake about the nature of theology? Presumably theology is done to the benefit of the world, not of God. God doesn't need theology; if anybody needs it, it is our fellow human beings. How can one communicate effectively without taking into account the needs and sensibilities, linguistic habits and cultural preferences, of the people to whom one is speaking? With theology it is *not* like with prayer. Hypocrites love to stand and pray in public places so that they may be seen by others; true Christians, Jesus taught, go to their rooms, shut their doors, and pray in secret. You should pray the way Balinese old men danced—with no human eye watching. But you should not do theology like that. When you pray, you speak to God; when you theologize, you speak to fellow human beings.

There is a major difference between Balinese dancers and theologians. Unlike those dancers, theologians essentially address people. We interpret the world for them in the light of God's designs; we reflect on how to align our lives and our world with God's purposes; we seek to motivate them to find fulfilment and be a blessing to the world by trusting and loving God. What we say as theologians and how we put it cannot be just a matter of movement 'from the inside to the outside', to use Taymor's phrase. We are 'pastors,' and must be sensitive to specific needs and situations of our 'parish', whether that is the church or the world. Neither in the way nor in the content of our speaking and writing can we abstract from all audiences and

just have God on our minds.

Yet the analogy to Balinese dancers applies. As we are speaking and writing for our fellow human beings, we are dancing for God. A god for whom one can dance only when one is not dancing for people, must be a false god—a god shut up in his own sphere and pursuing his own interests unrelated to the well-being of creation. This is not who the Triune God is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is the creator and an unflinching lover of creation; human beings and their world *are* God's sphere and interests. It is impossible to dance for this God to the detriment of creation. A dance pleasing to God will confer blessing upon creatures. Indeed, given that God is the source of all creation's good, *only* a dance that pleases God will make creation flourish.

A few months ago I was on a spiritual retreat in the hills of Vermont, New England. At the end of the retreat we prayed for one another, each for each. I will never forget the prayer a musician offered for me. He asked God that as a theologian I would 'play to the audience of One'. Now that's a challenge—to play as theologians to God and give it the best we have, our most rigorous thoughts, our best creativity, our most sustained discipline, and our undivided attention. As I heard the prayer uttered over me, I was deeply attracted and frightened at the same time. Do I have the courage, I wondered, really to play as if God, the lover of creation, were the only one listening? I soon discovered that a different name for my timidity was a failure to trust the One in whom alone all that is loved can be loved truly.



# The Theology of Theological Education

Brian Edgar

**KEYWORDS:** *Missional education, vocational education, classical education, confessional education*

Evangelical theological education as a whole today needs earnestly to pursue and recover a thoroughgoing theology of theological education.<sup>1</sup>

What is it that makes something *theological* education? The obvious answer for many is that it is *the content*. That is, it is education that is specifically about theology, about God (or, for some, about the experience of God). It is also possible to suggest that *the purpose* is definitive of what makes something theological education. After all, is it

enough to say that knowledge is sufficient to qualify something as theological education if it does not also intend to develop character and skills in life and holiness? Then again, does *the method* play a role in defining theological education? What process is to be followed? Does it involve academic research or is it a personal search to find the ultimate good?

Many involved in theological education would also suggest that *the ethos* is as important as the content and the method. The spirituality, both individual and communal, which permeates the educational process, is critical. Of course, this relates to *the context* in which the education takes place. Some prefer the academy, others the church and some the wider community. The difference is theologically significant. One cannot really discuss the defining characteristics of theological education without also paying attention to *the people* involved. Does the faith of those involved define in some way

---

**1** International Council for Evangelical Theological Education, *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* (2nd edition 1990).

---

**Dr Brian Edgar**, MTh, PhD, is Director of Public Theology for the Australian Evangelical Alliance; he was formerly Dean of Studies/lecturer in theology for the Bible College of Victoria, Australia (which embraces many of the dimensions of the fourfold typology discussed in the article) where he was responsible for the introduction of the MDiv form of theological education into Australia. During 2005, he has been the Beeson International Visiting Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary (USA). Dr Edgar is the author of *John M. Templeton Foundation award winning article, 'A New Immortality? Reflections on Genetics, Human Aging and the Possibility of Unlimited Lifespan'* ERT Vol. 23 No 4, (1999) 363-382, and *The Message of the Trinity* (Leicester, IVP, 2004).

some education as being theological even if the content is not overtly so?

So, given these seven important dimensions of the education, what is it that makes it *theological* education? It is not hard to conclude that theology actually permeates the whole enterprise. It is even less difficult to see that the numerous possibilities mean that there can be significant differences in what is considered theologically central for the educational enterprise. Inevitably some forms of theological education stress one or other aspect more than another and may insist that one or other is absolutely fundamental.

This paper maps out the similarities and differences in four broad approaches to theological education. It begins with an assessment of David Kelsey's classical—vocational, bipolar approach to theological education in which he describes the poles as 'Athens' and 'Berlin'. To this is added Robert Banks' missional approach, referred to as 'Jerusalem' and then I add a fourth, confessional model that is also identified geographically as 'Geneva'. This schema of four basic models creates a typological map that can locate specific theological education programs and institutions and their emphases, assist in their self-definition and indicate possibilities for movement to a new location in the theological education environment.

### Athens and a classical education

*In Between Athens and Berlin: the theological debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) David H. Kelsey examines theological education using an a-his-

torical typology in which the terms 'Athens' and 'Berlin' represent two very different approaches. These are, he maintains, 'the two normative types of theological education'<sup>2</sup>—at least as it exists in North America. Everything, he says, moves around an axis comprising these two poles.

By 'Athens' he means that the goals and methods of theological education are derived from classical Greek philosophical educational methodology. He argues that the early church adopted and adapted this model. The primary goal of this form of classical education is the transformation of the individual. It is all about character formation, the cultivation of excellence and knowing the supreme good, which, when applied to theological education means knowing God. Theological education is thus not so much knowing *about* God as it is about *knowing* God. It is not primarily about *theology*, that is, the formal study of the *knowledge* of God, but it is more about what Kelsey calls *theologia*, that is, gaining the *wisdom* of God.

Wisdom is sought, not simply knowledge, and theological education is fundamentally aretaic (that is, it is the development of the *virtues*, the *arete*—the excellence of the soul). It is the transformation of character to be God-like. The emphasis therefore falls upon personal development and spiritual formation. In that sense the focus is very much upon the individual though it is not necessarily individual-

---

<sup>2</sup> David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: the theological debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 27.

istic in the modern sense for it began, in the Greek context, as something orientated towards the *public good* rather than *private interest* and it was undertaken in communal context.

The early church adopted this educational philosophy not only because it was present culturally but also because of its obvious connections with biblical and theological emphases on holiness and the development of individual character. In theological education virtue is important and holiness essential. This approach affirmed the need for a complete, inner, personal, moral and spiritual transformation. In the case of *Christian* classical education, the sacred texts were scripture rather than the philosophers, although the study of the philosophers was still important and was understood to produce great reward. This educational emphasis on character was entirely consistent with a theologically grounded obedience to Christ worked out in the power of the Holy Spirit and depending on corporate worship, the close interpretation of scripture and pastoral care. It is no surprise that the early church soon adopted this model of theological education.

If theological education is understood in this way, in terms of *theologia* and the transformation of the individual, then holiness and moral, spiritual transformation are central to the educational task. Any assessment of a program of theological education on that basis would consider essential, for example, whether the curriculum adequately addressed issues of personal, moral formation and whether the values of the faculty and the institution as a whole were consistent with this approach.

## Berlin and the reflective practitioner

The second pole of Kelsey's typology is what he refers to as 'Berlin'. In his evaluation of it, Robert Banks prefers to call it the 'vocational' model in contrast to the 'classical' model of Athens.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the classical model is derived from antiquity the Berlin model is derived from the enlightenment. Berlin represents this approach to education because the University of Berlin was deliberately founded as a new form of research university as part of the Prussian reform of education undertaken along enlightenment lines.

In the new enlightenment universities theology had to justify its place. Previously, it had been the Queen of the Sciences because it was understood to be derived from divine revelation rather than by natural observation or deduction. But the palace revolution of the enlightenment meant that revelation was dethroned and reason reigned supreme. Whereas the classical model accepted the sacred texts (whether philosophers or Scriptures) as revelation containing that wisdom which is essential to life, now reason demanded that these texts be subject to critical enquiry. They could no longer be accepted on the basis that they were received authorities and they had to be proved. In a research university the texts are not rejected but they are treated differently, there is disciplined, orderly, rigorous enquiry.

The goal is no longer personal formation based on the study of authorita-

---

3 Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

tive, classic texts. The research university seeks to train people in rigorous enquiry, to find theory and to apply it to solve practical problems. It broadened out from the narrower classic approach in which the sources were limited to the ancient texts and now the whole panorama of human endeavour, including the natural sciences, physics, chemistry, the social sciences, arts and humanities became the legitimate focus of study. The PhD became the standard educational achievement and the aim was to establish a scientific theory that could then be applied to specific situations. Chemists developed theory, summarised in the periodic table of elements that could then be applied in chemical engineering. Physicists searched for the integrating laws of motion, gravitation and light. Engineers devised formula for safe and efficient building and biologists, medical practitioners and lawyers all learnt their theory and then practised their profession.

In this context, if theology was to be admitted as a science within the academy and the university, it had to demonstrate that it had both a body of theory and a practical function. It was thus argued (to the subsequent regret of some) that theology was indeed an area of *theoretical study* rather than of personal development and that its practical function was the *building up of the church*, primarily through the formation of ministers. Theological education was now ministerial training, rather than spiritual formation. The aim was the training of leaders for the church, to provide people able to apply theory to the life of the body and the emphasis fell on the development of hermeneutical skills, the interpreta-

tion of scripture and upon bold, visionary leadership.

If theological education is understood in this way then a review of a specific program of education will need to determine whether the context, the people and the methodology are appropriate for that task and whether, at the end of the educational program, it produces theoretically aware and practically effective ministers.

However, the presence of another clearly defined alternative model also allows for a comparative examination. In contrast to the classical model it becomes clear that while a strong understanding of theory and practice is important to the life of the church, the vocational model does tend to leave personal, moral, spiritual development in the background. It is also possible to ask whether the strong focus on research skills, gaining all that is necessary to develop a sound method in hermeneutics, is as appropriate for practitioners in the local church as it is for researchers in the university. Do professors working as researchers model what the local church needs? Or does it create pastors who preach like professors?

The contrast with the classical model also inevitably raises the question as to whether an enlightenment methodology that is associated with high levels of doubt and scepticism is ultimately healthy for theology.

It is clear that when the typology places two different models side by side it raises important questions about theological education and its underlying theology. A third model allows for an even more dynamic set of contrasts.

## From Jerusalem to the ends of the earth

Kelsey hints at the incompleteness of his bipolar model when he notes that Tertullian's well known question was 'What has Athens to do with *Jerusalem*? rather than 'What has Athens to do with Berlin?'<sup>4</sup> This points to the possibility of a third type of education. But, having paused to consider this possibility, Kelsey immediately moves on with the comment, 'Whatever the theologically normative case might be, however, it is the case that modern North American Christian theological education is committed to "Athens" and "Berlin", and it is committed to both of them for historical reason.'<sup>5</sup> And so, leaving behind what he describes as potentially theologically normative, Kelsey proceeds for the rest of the book to deal with the *de facto* situation.

This omission is unfortunate and that is a view shared by Robert Banks who, in his *Revisioning Theological Education*, develops a 'Jerusalem' model to stand beside Athens and Berlin. It is a missional model and its basic theology is derived from Kahler's dictum that 'missiology is the mother of theology'. Theological education is seen as a dimension of mission. It is an aspect of the teaching ministry of the church, involving specialized testimony to the kingdom, and the goal is the conversion of the world.

In the classic model 'formation' was personal transformation while in the vocational model it was ministerial

training, but in the missional model formation is a turning towards mission. Mission must have reference to all dimensions of life: family, friendships, work, neighbourhood. It encompasses the whole ministry of the whole people of God. Notice that it is a *mission* model, not a *missiological* model. In the latter case missiology is an important discipline, perhaps even the most important discipline within the full range of disciplines, but educationally speaking, a missiological approach is a specific form of the *vocational* approach which takes place within an academic, university style context rather than in the context of actual mission work in the wider community. A missiological approach to theological education may demonstrate the importance of mission to the life of the church, but if it does this by *providing a particular content* rather than by *transforming the process* itself, then it is not a missional model. For Banks the new content demands a new *style* of theological education.

## Geneva and the maintenance of tradition

While the addition of Bank's missional model to Kelsey's classical and vocational approaches is useful, a fourth approach is also needed in order to better describe the actual state of theological education. Using the same form of geographic identification, I call this fourth approach the 'Geneva' model of education, although it could just as easily be referred to as 'Rome' or any other city identified with a particular confessional approach. In a confessional approach to theological education the goal is to know God through

4 Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, p. 5.

5 Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, pp. 5-6.

the use of the creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and the general traditions that are utilized by a particular faith community. There is an emphasis on formation through teaching about the founders, the heroes, the struggles, the strengths and the traditions that are distinctive and formative for that community of faith. Formation occurs through *in-formation* about the tradition and *en-culturation* within it. For it to be effective it needs to have reference to all dimensions of life, including family, friendships, work, community and ministry.

The nature of the Geneva model is illuminated by a set of contrasts. Firstly, the appropriate *context* for theological education in the confessional model is the seminary and this stands in contrast to the classical approach that is grounded in the academy, the vocational that is intrinsically con-

nected to the university and the missional that undertakes training in the wider community. Secondly, the *goal* of the confessional model is to enable people to know God through a particular tradition while for the classical approach the aim is the transformation of the individual. The vocational model aims at the strengthening of the church and the missional model aims at converting or transforming the world.

Thirdly, in Geneva *theology* is understood as the process of knowing God while in Athens theology is intuited wisdom. In Berlin theology is a way of thinking and applying theory to life and the church and in Jerusalem theology is missiological. These contrasts show that the typology as a whole can make clear that the various debates about the specifics of theological education are actually debates about fundamental theology.

### The typology in diagrammatic form

<p><b>CLASSICAL</b>      Transforming the individual</p> <p><b>ATHENS</b> Academy</p> <p>THEOLOGIA</p>	<p>Knowing God</p> <p><b>CONFESSIONAL</b></p> <p><b>GENEVA</b> Seminary</p> <p>DOXOLOGY</p>
<p>MISSIOLOGY</p> <p><b>JERUSALEM</b> Community</p> <p>Converting the world</p> <p><b>MISSIONAL</b></p>	<p>SCIENTIA</p> <p><b>BERLIN</b> University</p> <p>Strengthening the church</p> <p><b>VOCATIONAL</b></p>

### Limitations of the typology

The kind of typology that is demonstrated here is not above criticism. An understanding of its potential limitations may persuade educators that its use is inappropriate or, more optimistically, it may enhance its use by enabling potential pitfalls to be avoided.

The first potential limitation is that the typology may provide a theoretical framework where actual forms of theological education are pressed into categories that are not really accurate descriptions of their characteristics. Its validity in that situation depends upon the level of sophistication and understanding of those who use it. If it is perceived as reflecting reasonably accurately the nature of theological education as it exists, then it may prove to be helpful as individuals and institutions undergo self analysis in the light of the typology.

Secondly, the typology is not, of course, comprehensive. It deals only with four major approaches to theological education and it would be possible to add a fifth or even a sixth approach. On the other hand, one of the strengths of the typology is its simplicity. Absolute comprehensiveness may come at the expense of usefulness. A third potential limitation is that some may find the use of the geographic identifications to be unhelpful. They may prefer the descriptive terminology of classical, vocational, missional and confessional.

Fourthly, there is no doubt that the typology is western in form and style. It largely relates to theological education conducted by mainline churches and white, male, professional, first

world people in formal academic institutions. Its attempt to incorporate other forms of theological education through the missional model may, or may not adequately reflect the real situation. And it may not relate very well in non-western contexts. It should also be noted that the typology is primarily theoretical and academic in form. Who should determine what theological education should be? Should it be theological educators, ministry practitioners, ecclesiastical leaders or the whole community of faith? So the typology is subject to the criticism that theological education is not a simply higher stage of education for some, but a dimension of everyone's Christian education.

Finally, some may consider that the identification of a particular characteristic with one or other model implies that it is exclusive to that particular type. That is not intended. No doubt there are other limitations as well. Those who intend to use the typology are encouraged to consider them, especially as they relate to their own context.

### Conclusion: a case study

Many programs of theological education as they actually exist today are actually a mix of the types noted here. Those involved in these programs can use the typology to map out where they stand and to consider where they perhaps ought to be. If we consider for a moment a hypothetical example, it is possible to see that reality and theory can be related though the typology.

Consider, for example, a Methodist theological education program. According to the typology it could be located at a variety of points on the the-

ological scene and have any number of different emphases, all of which are consistent with Methodist theological principles. It could take a *confessional* approach, deliberately stressing Methodist theology, traditions and spirituality. It could also lean towards the *classical* model because spiritual formation, holiness and sanctification are significant in the Methodist tradition. A *vocational* approach to Methodist education would be one that stressed the need to develop theoretical skills for practical ministry within the church while a *missional* model could well flow from Wesley's evangelistic focus and the conviction that 'The world is my parish'.

These different emphases are not inconsistent and can be combined, but if, for example, the decision is made to locate the program in the wider community then it shifts the educational process very significantly towards the missional end of the spectrum and may (or may not) mean that other aspects of confessional training, personal development and ministry practice become secondary. It is likely that many forms of Methodist theological education will actually be mixed models with an emphasis in one or other direction. The nature of the mix is what makes a particular program distinctive. It is hoped that others will find the typology a helpful tool for analysis and development

### A survey

The typology which is outlined above could become the basis for discussion by various educational institutions. The following very informal survey may provide fruitful discussion mater-

ial for those involved in particular institutions, especially if administered to a group prior to the reading of the accompanying article. It is not intended to be used to gather quantitatively valid statistical information, but rather as the basis for a discussion on the nature of theological education by those with an interest in that area.

1. Theology can be described in many ways. Which one of these statements would you place *first* in your prioritized list of what it involves?

1. Theology is wisdom, knowing God.
2. Theology is a tool, a way of thinking about the world.
3. Theology is developing a knowledge of God.
4. Theology is missiology.
5. Theology involves all of the above and any separation is entirely arbitrary and unhelpful.
6. Theology is .....(if you don't choose one of the above please complete the sentence yourself).

2. Theological education also involves a number of dimensions, but which of these do you think *best* describes its goal for the student?

1. Personal, spiritual, moral growth and transformation of life and character
  2. Vocational, ministry training to strengthen the church
  3. Growth in the knowledge of God and the ability to think theologically.
  4. Enhancement of missiological knowledge and abilities.
  5. This is another false forced choice; it has to be all of them!
  6. None of the above, rather it is .....
3. Which of the following statements



*best* describes the role of the teacher/professor/ lecturer/educator?

1. Model and provide the student with access to, and teaching concerning, the intellectual, spiritual and moral disciplines needed in the Christian life.
2. Be an experienced and knowledgeable researcher who works with the student to enhance their knowledge of particular areas of study and the related research and analytical skills.
3. Demonstrate the life of one who knows God and is able to stimulate and help students think theologically.
4. Be an experienced practitioner who is able to share in and actively help students develop their gifts for ministry and mission.
5. They have to be all of the above.
6. My alternative, preferred definition in twenty words or less is .....

4. Many things are learnt in theological education. Some of them are probably helpful. Which of the following statements would you rate as *most* important?

1. It is important for students to study the Scriptures in order to be personally transformed.
2. It is important for students to develop the skills to be able to examine, critique, understand and teach the Scriptures.
3. It is important for students to study the Scriptures in order to discover the character and nature of God.
4. It is important for students to study the Scriptures in order to understand the ministry of the church and to be able to apply Scriptural

principles in their own ministry.

5. Not only are all of the above needed, but none of them has any priority.
6. It is important for students to study Scripture because .....

*Evaluation:* When all four questions have been answered, the next step is to see whether a pattern has emerged. The first four statements in each of the questions relates, respectively, to the classical (Athens), vocational (Berlin), confessional (Geneva) and missional (Jerusalem) approaches to theological education. The fifth option in each case suggests that each is equally important while the final option allows individuals to express themselves on the matter. This may help clarify where an individual stands on the matter and it is possible to compare results for a number of people in the one institution. The aim of the process is to clarify and to enhance the reflective process.

### Expanded typology

Accompanying the article and the questionnaire is an expanded version of the typology in tabular form. It includes nine dimensions of the four types and allows for an easy comparison of the various approaches. The comments are rather cryptic and are more suggestive than definitive. Like the questionnaire it may provide a useful basis for discussion.

Symbol	Athens	Berlin	Geneva	Jerusalem
Model	Classical	Vocational	Confessional	Missional
Context	Academy. It is public education. Individually based yet it requires a communal atmosphere. It is a shared task.	University. It is public education. It takes place in association with the church. It requires an open, scholarly community.	Seminary. It is a specifically ecclesial education usually undertaken in the context of a coherent, believing community	Community. It is mission education and it takes place in the context of mission, the wider community
Goal/purpose	Transforming the individual. The goal is <i>paedia</i> —character formation—the cultivation of excellence or knowing the good (God). It is the development of the virtues.	Strengthening the church. Training of leaders for the church, those able to apply theory to the life of the church. Practical thinkers, reflective practitioners needed.	Knowing God. A way of life expressing the life of the believer in God. Objective knowledge of God combined with subjective union with God.	Converting the world. Mission—discipleship. Theological education is a dimension of mission and has a special mission context.
Emphasis	Personal formation. Disposition. Knowing who...	Interpretive skills. Functional. Knowing how...	In-formation. En-culturation. Knowing what...	Mission. Partnership. Knowing for...
Scope	Whole church—spiritual guides	Clergy—skilled leaders	Clergy—teachers.	Whole church missionaries/ministers.
Formation	It began in Greek context, as something for the public good but became individualized and focused on inner, personal, moral and religious transformation.	The task of theology is to clarify vocational identity as the basis for Christian practice.	Discursive analysis, comparison and synthesis of beliefs.	Learning has to have reference to all dimensions of life, family, friendships, work and neighbourhood.
Theology	Theology is the knowledge of God, not about God. It is wisdom that is initiated.	Theology is a way of thinking, applying theory to life. Theology is applied: spiritual, missiological, vocational.	Theology is knowing God through a specific tradition.	Missiology is the mother of theology. It involves action—mission.
Source of authority	Searching inquiry into texts. It starts with an assumption of their authority (antiquity is good) based on revelation. Theology is the queen of the sciences. It is theology from above.	Radical critical inquiry into texts. It begins with a search for justification of authority and is much more self-conscious about method. Authority based on reason. It is theology from below.	Analysis, systematization, application of confessional texts—scriptural, historical and contemporary. It is theology from the past.	The mission of Jesus, his disciples making ministry. It is theology for the future church.
Teacher	Provider of indirect assistance through intellectual and moral disciplines to help the students undergo formation. The teacher is also searching and models the process.	Professor: the teacher is a researcher whom the students assist. Teacher qualities: researcher and able to develop research abilities in others.	Priest: knowledge of the tradition. Lives and exemplifies it as well as knows it.	Practitioner/missionary: the teacher is not removed from practice. Discipled, involved. Teaching involves sharing lives as well as truth.
Student	<i>Theologia</i> cultivates the individual's spirit, character and mind to develop a disposition ( <i>habitus</i> ).	Becomes theoretician able to apply theory to practice.	Initiated into the tradition, the beliefs, the vocation, the ministry	Discipled to become disciple-maker

# A Theology of Theological Education: Pedagogical Implications

Larry J. McKinney

**KEYWORDS:** *Theology, revelation, Holy Spirit, anthropology, psychology, maturity.*

## Introduction

Yale Divinity School professor, David Kelsey, prompted an interesting theological debate on the nature of theological education in 1993 through his book entitled, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Eerdmans, 1993). The central questions in this book were firstly, 'What is theological about theological education?' and secondly, 'What is the nature and purpose of theological education?'

In addressing these two primary questions, Kelsey looked at two normative models that are at opposite ends of the educational spectrum—the *Athens model* and the *Berlin model*. The *Athens model* promoted the Greek concept of '*paideia*'—the cultivation of the soul, the development of character. This view proposed that the goal of the-

ological education is to develop within students a 'knowledge of God' and the 'formation of souls to be holy'. Using this particular paradigm, it is the teacher's responsibility to help cultivate spiritual growth or piety within students.

Conversely, the *Berlin model* embraced the German idea of '*Wissenschaff*'. This concept promoted orderly, disciplined critical research on one hand and professional education for the clergy on the other. This view reflected a broader movement in Europe to reshape education along Enlightenment principles. With this second paradigm, the teacher facilitates research or critical thinking but is not necessarily a spiritual mentor to students. The German university model was quite opposite to the medieval European university that was tied into the church.

In considering these two extreme views relative to the nature and purpose of theological education, Kelsey considered five different perspectives

---

*Larry J. McKinney* (EdD, Temple University, MA, Wheaton College, BS, Philadelphia Biblical University) is Executive Director of the Association for Biblical Higher Education based in Orlando, Florida. He served as the President of Providence College and Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba (Canada) from 1993-2001 and as the Vice President for Student Development at Philadelphia Biblical University from 1980-1993. He also serves as Board Chair Emeritus for the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education.

that were positioned somewhere in between these two bi-polar views.

Kelsey noted that the debate was not focused on the pedagogical question, 'What is the most effective way to teach in theological education?' While recognizing that theological teaching could benefit from pedagogical insights, he suggested that such 'improvement would not necessarily result in better theological education'. Rather, the central question is: 'What is the nature and specific purpose of *theological* education? What separates it from other apparently closely related academic enterprises as distinctly, *theological* education?'

While understanding Kelsey's desire to focus on the nature and purpose of theological education, I do not believe that pedagogy can be separated from theology in discussing the topic. After all, the discussion is about *theological 'education'*. If appropriate attention is going to be given to the meaning of theological education, pedagogy must be part of the equation. Pedagogy helps to define theological education. On the flip side, I do not believe that the topic of Christian education can be discussed appropriately without including theology. Theology is central not only because it is the content of Christian education, but also because it most directly deals with the presuppositions lying behind Christian teaching.

Theological beliefs provide the very foundation for Christian education or pedagogy. Pedagogy and theology are both key components in defining theological education. The two elements are inextricably linked together. Theological education should be shaped by both one's theology and pedagogy. There are pedagogical implications for

theological education just as there are theological implications.

Building upon the argument that pedagogy and theology are equally important in defining the nature and purpose of theological education, this article examines five theological issues that are prominent in debates about Christian education and theological education. They serve to shape one's pedagogical paradigm or philosophy of teaching. They also help to define one's theology. The positions taken on these issues give concrete shape and direction to the way one approaches theological education.

## 1. Knowledge of God: We must have a metaphysics that recognizes God.

Metaphysics have to do with the questions of ultimate reality. The claim of a Christian philosophy is that this ultimate reality resides in the eternal God himself. Thus genuine theological education begins, proceeds, and ends with the *concept of a triune God from whom everything else derives its existence*. What were we made for? To know God. What should be our primary goal in life? To know God. What is the 'eternal life' that Jesus Christ gives? Knowledge of God. 'Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, who you sent' (John 17:3). What should bring us the greatest joy in life? What brings God the greatest pleasure? A knowledge of himself.<sup>1</sup> 'For I desire mercy, not sacri-

---

1 J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1973), p. 29.

face, an acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings' (Hosea 6:6).

### Knowledge as a Relationship

The knowledge of God being discussed is not an abstract knowledge that comes from academic pursuits, but the knowledge that grows out of a mature relationship. The closest parallel that we can experience to the true knowledge of God is the knowledge of another person that results from a friendship. J. I. Packer put it well when he said, 'Why has God spoken?... The truly staggering answer which the Bible gives to this question is that God's purpose in revelation is to *make friends* with us.'<sup>2</sup> God desires a deep, loving friendship with each of us—a friendship in which each party comes to know and understand the other. A marriage, a courtship, or a deep friendship cannot exist just on feelings. Coming to know another person involves shared experiences, commitment and communication.

A basic assumption in the field of communication is expressed by the formula '*Communication = Content + Relationship*.'<sup>3</sup> Communication normally consists of words that are said (content) and the thoughts and feelings that the people who are involved have about each other (relationship). Knowledge of God or communication with him depends on our grasping content (the Bible and theology) and experiencing a vital relationship with him.

Without a reconciled relationship to God that is based on the work of Christ, true knowledge of God is impossible. Conversely, just as a relationship in which lovers or friends never exchange information about themselves is doomed, so too a relationship with God cannot develop merely on feelings of reconciliation. A growing friendship requires an objective understanding of what the other person is like (content).<sup>4</sup>

### Head Knowledge vs. Heart Knowledge

Many people believe that religious knowledge comes in two forms: 'head knowledge' and 'heart knowledge'. Head knowledge (knowledge of the Bible and theology) is often viewed as having only indirect impact on one's religious life. Only when this information is internalized does it affect one's life. By contrast, heart knowledge (one's values, beliefs, attitudes) is viewed as very important in a person's daily life. While this popular dichotomy has some limitations, it points to one fundamental principle concerning Christian knowledge: knowing about God must never be confused with knowing God. James 2:18-19 speaks to this problem, 'Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.' The possession of certain beliefs or facts must not be equated with knowledge of God.

<sup>2</sup> Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Em Griffin, *Getting Together* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1982), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 30.

On the other hand, reliance on heart knowledge, or knowledge based primarily on feelings, can also create major problems. Such knowledge has no frame of reference beyond one's own personal experiences. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul spoke of the spiritual insanity, brought on by following one's momentary feelings, as a mark of immaturity. He exhorted the Ephesians to 'no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning craftiness of men and their deceitful scheming' (Ephesians 4:14). Paul wanted the Ephesians to maintain the stability that comes only by using something more permanent than feelings as a guide for life. Knowledge of and relationship with God are to be based on something more than mere feelings.

### True Knowledge of God: Facts, Feelings, and Proper Relationship

Head knowledge and heart knowledge are not contradictory alternatives. In fact, neither of them in isolation represents the biblical conception of religious knowledge. For the Hebrews, knowledge of God meant 'recognition of, and obedience to, one who acted purposefully in the world'.<sup>5</sup> To know something meant to have experienced it or to have observed it in such a way that it made an impact on one's life. Something is known when it becomes part of one, not simply when it can be

defined or recognized.

From a biblical perspective, knowledge is both the result of a relationship with God and one of the major factors that strengthens our relationship with him. It is both the product and catalyst of this relationship. Factual knowledge and feeling-based knowledge must be coupled with an experiential knowledge of God. Persons can know God only if they have walked with him, worshipped him, prayed to him—in other words lived as if his existence mattered. This is not to diminish the value of the Bible in the process of knowing God, for the Bible is a necessary and irreplaceable source of information about God. Knowledge of the Bible, however, must always be seen as a means to an end, namely, knowledge of God which can come only through the work of Jesus Christ. Theological education is hollow and meaningless unless educators acknowledge—both implicitly and explicitly—the importance of knowing God deeply and personally.<sup>6</sup>

Briefly returning to the David Kelsey question about the nature and purpose of theological education, the position that has just been developed clearly fits with the Athens model (*paideia*)—we must have an educational process that promotes a personal knowledge of God. Theological education must emphasize the importance of knowing God deeply and personally.

---

5 E. Blackman, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 121.

---

6 Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*, p. 35.

## 2. Centrality of Written Revelation: We must have an epistemology that is built upon Revelation.

Epistemology has to do with the question of the essence of knowledge and how we know that it is true. The claim of orthodox Christianity is that knowledge is found in revelation: natural, living, and written. Theological education should begin, proceed, and end with the concept of divine revelation. Divine revelation is central to theological education.

Without the Bible as the foundation and core of the curriculum in theological education, there can be no true Christian education. An adequate philosophy of theological education must incorporate the basic concept of God's revelation of himself to humankind through the medium of the written Word, the Bible. Because of the sinful, depraved condition of humankind (Romans 3:10-23, Ephesians 2:1-2), God revealed himself in various ways: in creation (referred to as general revelation); in direct revelation (particularly in the Old Testament through dreams, visions, and the spoken word); in miracles; in Christ (Living Word); and in the Scriptures (Written Word), God's supernatural revelation. While the process of revelation is broader than the Bible, the content of special revelation is rooted in the biblical message.

In evangelical theological education, Scriptural revelation is accepted as the Christian's supreme and final authority. The written revelation is central to theological education for

three reasons.<sup>7</sup>

### Scriptural Revelation is of Divine Origin

Since God has revealed himself in divine, written form, one need not search for a further source of knowledge about God and a means of experience with him. His revelation is divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), and, therefore, authoritative and trustworthy.

The Bible is the 'given' content, the authoritative norm for theological education. It is essential to any ministry that seeks to teach others God's ways and will.

### Scriptural Revelation is the Means of Imparting Divine Life

The Scriptures should be basic to theological education because they are a means of imparting divine life (1 Peter 1:23), and they are the source of Christian nurture and growth (1 Peter 2:2). A valid Christian experience cannot be obtained or maintained apart from valid Christian truth. The Bible is the foundation on which effective theological education can be implemented.

If Christian experience or knowledge of God is sought from sources other than biblical revelation, then theological education is relegated to a humanistic, anthropocentric religious education. In true evangelical theological education, the Bible is the objec-

---

<sup>7</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), pp. 12-13.

tive body of truth to which the experiences of teachers and students are to be related and by which their experiences are to be evaluated.

### Scriptural Revelation Provides a Standard

Without the Bible as the foundation for theological education, the experiences of students are impossible to measure. Omit the Bible and the teachers have no basis of evaluation by which to judge the validity of spiritual experiences. Without the Bible, teachers and pupils are left to their subjective, self-imposed standards. But with written revelation as the evaluative standard, students are challenged to come to faith, to live lives of holiness, and to grow to spiritual maturity. Therefore, the place of the written revelation is integral, not peripheral, to a theology of theological education that is distinctly biblical. The Bible is the body of truth that is essential to the transformation of lives, first in conversion and then in the living out of one's relationship with God.

The theological position outlined in this section, that the Scriptures are divinely inspired and serve as the standard for life and godliness, does not imply a mindless literalism. Instead, theological education calls for the appropriation of the plain and common sense meaning of Scripture as normative for thought and practice. The Scriptures are viewed as divinely inspired and Christians are called to discern a biblical agenda in the area of theological education, as in all areas of thought and practice. 'The Scriptures function as the final authority and serve as a grid through which all other

truths are examined for their consistency with a biblical world view in mind.'<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the greatest danger for evangelicals, with a strong emphasis on biblical authority, is that it can lead to dead orthodoxy, a literalism or biblicism emphasizing biblical principles divorced from life. It can also result in an educational practice that imposes truths upon people without allowing them to think seriously about and grapple with the implications of affirming such truths. Such a practice is manipulative indoctrination, and does not result in personal appropriation, internalization, and the transfer of learning to other situations. Such an authoritarian stance in education demands mindless compliance and obedience at the loss of personal integrity and rationality. It reduces the response of living obedience to God to a superficial conformity contrary to a biblical understanding of personhood. Robert W. Pazmino warned that 'a mindless and spiritless focus upon the written Word may not result in vital contact with the living Word, Jesus Christ'.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Role of the Holy Spirit: We must have an educational process that is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in theological education. However, educators do not always fully agree

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, p. 51.



concerning the nature of the Spirit's work in biblical teaching and learning. For this reason, a well-developed theology of the Holy Spirit's role in theological education must be based on all of the relevant biblical passages and themes, and not just a few of special interest. Three primary dimensions of the Holy Spirit's work in the teaching-learning process are identified.

### The Spirit and the Teacher

The Holy Spirit acts in several ways to facilitate the work of the teacher. First, the Spirit gives certain persons the gift of teaching (Romans 12:7). Second, the Spirit gradually renews Christians, both teachers and students, from the inside out. The fullness of the image of God is being restored as Christians open themselves to the working of God's grace (2 Corinthians 3:18). Third, a significant ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians is illumination. Roy B. Zuck defined illumination as... 'the Spirit's work in enabling Christians to discern the meaning of the message and to welcome and receive it as from God'.<sup>10</sup> This is of special importance to teachers, since it enables them to comprehend and appreciate biblical truth (1 Corinthians 2:12).

### The Spirit and the Student

The Holy Spirit's ministry is needed so that the Bible will find application in the lives of students. The Holy Spirit and the written Scriptures work together. 'Bible knowledge in the heart

of a Christian must be acted on by the Holy Spirit in order to produce Christian conduct.<sup>11</sup> The Holy Spirit is not only active in the rebirth experience but also brings spiritual vision, spiritual receptivity, and a desire for service. Furthermore, the Spirit convicts and guides students regarding areas of their lives that need attention.

### The Spirit and the Subject Matter

The primary content of theological education is the Bible, but it does extend to other disciplines and other learning resources. For this reason, theological education must be concerned not about the Bible alone, but about the whole of life with which the Bible deals. 'The scope of theological education is the whole gospel and the whole of life in the light of the gospel.'<sup>12</sup>

The Bible was born through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the inspiration of the Spirit, the writers were able to record a divine message (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit has not abandoned the Bible today. He still speaks through the Bible to the church and the world. In at least three concrete ways the Spirit illumines and empowers the Scriptures:<sup>13</sup> First, the Spirit testifies that the Bible is the Word of God. Second, the Spirit uses Scripture to wit-

---

<sup>11</sup> Brian Richardson, 'Do Bible Facts Change Attitudes?', *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (April-June, 1984), p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> R. Henderlite, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> Henderlite, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Education*, pp. 62-63.

---

<sup>10</sup> Zuck, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*, p. 54.

ness to and glorify Jesus Christ. Finally, the Spirit acts to give contemporary significance to the message and the events of the Bible.

#### 4. Nature of Human Kind:

**We must have an anthropology that recognizes that people are created in the Image of God.**

The biblical view of human nature runs counter to contemporary approaches to education. The Bible calls us to recognize the 'grandeur as well as the misery of man'.<sup>14</sup> In regards to the biblical view, people are made in the image of God, but they are sinners. They are capable of great sacrifice and service, and yet, apart from Christ, they are unable to please God fully. This view of human nature has no parallel in secular theories of education and is a major obstacle to wholesale adoption of such theories by some evangelicals. The romantic position that children are basically good and the radical position behaviourist notion that persons are to be viewed as machines simply do not square with the biblical witness. Grandeur and fallenness, sinner and yet bearer of God's image—these characteristics create tensions with which education that is truly Christian must deal.

#### Made in the Image of God

Christians must never think of the fallenness of humankind as obliterating

their distinctive mark—the image of God, which is marred but never fully erased. Christ, who was fully human, was also perfectly good. And through God's grace human being can live lives of creativity, harmony, and service, both individually and corporately.<sup>15</sup>

One of the ways that human kind is created in the image of God is the totality of human personality—one's intellect, one's emotions, and one's will. 'So the process of teaching is that of one's total personality transformed by the supernatural grace of God, reaching out to transform other personalities by the same grace.'<sup>16</sup>

#### Human State of Sin

Sin, however, is the aspect of human nature that requires our attention. All persons are sinners separated from God and standing in need of reconciliation. We must be wary of the notion that one can evolve into a Christian. The image of the new birth depicts radical change, a complete metamorphosis, but it may not be a sudden change. Change and maturity often take time. In fact, theological education is just one type of Christian ministry that helps to promote change and growth. The dark side of human nature precludes a theological education program that will be one-hundred percent effective. Since the educational process places the responsibility for learning and change on the shoulders

---

<sup>15</sup> Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*, p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Howard G. Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987), pp. 105-106.

---

<sup>14</sup> D. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 88.

of the students, its outcome can never be assured.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Goal of Christian Maturity: We must have a pedagogy that focuses on Christian maturity.

Central to the aim of theological education should be the promotion of Christian maturity. Theological education should seek to enable the Christian to glorify God more fully and to participate more deeply in the life and service of the church. According to biblical teaching, Christian maturity is associated with four basic concepts.

### Spiritual Autonomy

The first mark of Christian maturity is spiritual autonomy. Spiritually autonomous individuals have control over their lives and are appropriately self-directed. Without appropriate self-direction, believers cannot mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, some church and theological leaders view autonomy as negative, equating it with self-indulgence. Yet how can we surrender our lives to Christ if we do not control them? (Romans 12:1).

### Spiritual Wholeness

The second mark of Christian maturity is spiritual wholeness, a quality described in verses such as, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and

with all your soul and with all your strength' (Deuteronomy 6:5). To be spiritually whole, then is 'to give all that you know of yourself, to all that you know of God'. The critical factor in spiritual wholeness is not knowledge or education but quality of dedication, giving one-hundred percent of self. The apostle Paul summarised his ministry as one that sought to 'present every one mature in Christ' (Colossians 1:28). Christian maturity is possible, but not guaranteed, for those who open themselves to the working of God's grace in their lives.

### Spiritual Stability

The third mark of Christian maturity is spiritual stability. This should not be confused with psychological stability. Spiritual stability is acquired over time and grows with proper responses to the opportunities and challenges of life. As a result, it is a characteristic that should increase through one's spiritual journey.

### Spiritual Understanding

Finally, the concept of spiritual maturity is linked with the wise use of knowledge. Spiritually mature individuals understand the significant issues of the faith and can use this knowledge to inform their lives and teach others. In contrast, the immature can handle nothing but spiritual milk, 'But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil' (Hebrews 5:14). Mature believers understand the essentials of the faith and are able to work with these truths to shape their lives.

---

<sup>17</sup> Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*, pp. 55-56.

Returning once again to the critical question raised by David Kelsey relative to the nature and purpose of theological education, the final position that has just been developed clearly supports the Athens model (*paideia*) as opposed to the Berlin model (*wissenschaft*). In Greek, *paideia* meant a process of 'culturing the soul'. Character or spiritual formation was considered paramount. This developmental process involved the whole person, not just the student's mind. Consistent with Edward Farley's argument in *Theologia*, theological education should promote a 'Christian *paideia*'.<sup>18</sup> This is the reason why evangelical theological education fits better with the Athens model as a normative type of education than the Berlin model. If Christianity is seen as *paideia*, as it has been in ancient traditions, then theological education's goal is a knowledge of God and the formation of a person's soul to be holy.

---

18 Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. xi.

## Conclusion

In summary, theology is crucial to theological education. It helps to determine why (philosophy) we teach and how (pedagogy) we teach. Often theological education has drifted far from orthodox teaching, particularly in regard to the Christian view of human nature and spiritual growth. This drifting is unfortunate, for theological education is lost unless grounded in biblically-based teaching. No matter how much expertise or professional sophistication a theological educator may have, it is of little value apart from an awareness of the essential theological elements that should shape our teaching.

When theological educators understand the importance of growing in relationship with God, the true purpose of the Bible, the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching, the implications of human nature for the learning process, and the essence of spiritual maturity, they will be far better equipped to shape the lives of their students. Without this understanding, theological education is reduced to programs and activities that have no higher calling than to make students feel content about their academic and professional lives.

### The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis

A major achievement in Old Testament studies, this comprehensive five-volume dictionary is an invaluable study aid for all involved in the analysis and exposition of the Old Testament.

*'When dictionaries and encyclopaedias are multiplying, NIDOTTE looks set to become the standard work in this field for all who respect the Bible.'*

Alan Millard (Rankin Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, University of Liverpool)

0-85364-834-4 (5 volume set) / £169.99

**Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK**

# Perspectives on Theological Education from the Old Testament

M. Daniel Carroll R.

**KEYWORDS:** *Literacy, canon, mission, archaeology, schooling, lifestyle, obedience, love*

## Introduction

In his book, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, Robert Banks bemoans the fact that more recent significant publications on theological education give little serious consideration of the Bible as a potential source for insights into its method, goals, and content.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, Banks' observation is in the main correct. On the other hand, a perusal of evangelical textbooks on teaching, as opposed to theological or ministerial training, does reveal attempts to

appeal in some measure to both the Old and New Testaments for guidance; at the same time, such a survey also demonstrates that the expertise of this appeal can be quite varied.

For example, Lois LeBar's *Education that is Christian* searches the wilderness narratives of Exodus and Numbers for practical lessons for pedagogy and finds support for the importance of real-life situations, the use of the senses, and the value of repetition, questions, and testing.<sup>2</sup> Gangel and Benson's brief survey of the Old Testament material is more detailed. Their chapter highlights the theistic focus of education in Israel and points out the various agencies (the family, the sanctuary) and agents (parents, priests and Levites, and the prophets) of theological education throughout the nation's

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missiological Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 73-82. His review of the biblical material is found on pp. 83-126 (for the Old Testament, see pp. 83-89).

---

<sup>2</sup> Lois E. LeBar, *Education that is Christian* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1989), pp. 107-125.

---

**M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas)**, BA, ThM, PhD, is Earl S. Kalland Chair of Old Testament at Denver Seminary (U.S.) and adjunct professor at El Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (Guatemala City, Guatemala). He is affiliated with the Evangelical Theological Society, the Institute of Biblical Research, the Society of Biblical Literature, the Society for Old Testament Study (Great Britain), the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana*, the Latin American Studies Association, and *Evangelicals for Social Action*. He serves on the international editorial boards of *Religion & Theology* (South Africa) and *DavarLogos* (Argentina) and is a contributing editor to *Prism*, the journal of *Evangelicals for Social Action*. He has authored contexts for Amos: Prophetic Poetics in Latin American Perspective and Amos—the Prophet and His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos and has edited a number of volumes on Old Testament studies.

history.<sup>3</sup> Pazmiño cites just a few passages that demonstrate God's desire to encounter his people in order to teach them about his person.<sup>4</sup> Some authors appeal to older works of a more scholarly vein, but these sources can be quite dated.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of this essay is a modest one. The goal is to offer three different perspectives from different facets of Old Testament studies that might be useful in reflecting upon the multiple dimensions of theological education. We will not try to summarise all the possible material related to education in ancient Israel in the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> The discussion is divided into three parts. The first, and longest, presents a summary of archaeological data that can illuminate the issues of literacy and formal education in ancient Israel. These are two pertinent topics for anyone today interested in theological education in an institutional sense.

With the second section, this essay shifts from archaeology to the biblical text. That section will suggest that each of the three major parts of the Hebrew Bible can contribute in its own way to a better understanding of the

nature of theological education. Lastly, on the basis of Deuteronomy 6, a favourite passage for many, the third section emphasizes that theological education in the Old Testament ideally needs to be connected to the mission of the people of God.

## New Dimensions from Old Testament Studies

### Educational Realities in Ancient Israel

It is not uncommon for studies on theological education that deal with the Old Testament to concentrate on a few central theological foundations and on one specific social institution. Theological emphasis, for example, is placed on the person of Yahweh as the centre of what was to be taught to the people of God while the social institution that often receives attention as the most important setting for theological training is the family. These observations, of course, are helpful and important but they are, however, *textual* arguments—that is, they are based primarily, if not exclusively, on biblical passages. What can be overlooked are data dealing with the actual state of education in Israel. Theological education today must deal with pragmatic, fundamental issues, like the level of literacy of students and pedagogical strategies. Similar challenges would have been important in their own way in the ancient world as well.

Scholars have debated the extent of literacy in Israel for the last two decades. There are those who would claim that the level of literacy was relatively low, since supposedly the cul-

3 Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), pp. 19-32.

4 Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 22-27, 162f.

5 E.g., William Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), pp. 11-48.

6 Helpful introductory surveys include André Lemaire, 'Education (Israel)', *ABD* 2:305-12; Gerald H. Wilson, 'Education in the OT', *NIDOTTE* 4:559-64.

ture at that time would have been largely oral and based on an oral mentality. In addition, writing on some media, such as inscribing stone and metal, as well as the skills required to master complicated scripts probably would have been too difficult for the common person. In such an oral context writing may even have been thought to have had magical and symbolic power. Literacy, therefore, would have been confined to scribal, governmental, and priestly circles.<sup>7</sup>

The epigraphic material, however, can be interpreted in a different manner.<sup>8</sup> Evidence for the wide diffusion of

writing is actually quite substantial and can be charted both geographically and chronologically. Findings range from sites in the north to fortresses and a caravan centre in the southern regions of the United Kingdom and later Judah and from the twelfth and eleventh centuries (Iron Age I) through to the sixth century B.C.E. (Iron Age II)—that is, from the time of the judges to the fall of the Southern monarchy. Several discoveries merit special mention.

In Samaria, the capital of Israel, numerous ostraca,<sup>9</sup> which appear to be government records registering the deliveries of produce from the interior of the country, and clay bullae<sup>10</sup> with diverse figures and writing have been found that substantiate the role of writing in different strata of government and for commercial activity. Less has been uncovered in Judah's capital, Jerusalem, but that is not surprising in light of the multiple destructions and layers of rebuilding that the city has experienced over millennia.<sup>11</sup> In addi-

---

7 Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), pp. 39-59; Ian M. Young, 'Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence, Part I', *VT* 48, no. 2 (1998): 239-52; idem, 'Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence, Part II', *VT* 48, no. 3 (1998): 408-22; James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 29-49. For a balanced critique, see William M. Schniedewind, 'Orality and Literacy in Ancient Israel', *RSR* 26, no. 4 (2000): 327-32. Because of the large bibliography on this topic, in these notes we cite only a few of the more recent important sources.

8 Allan R. Millard, 'The Knowledge of Writing in Iron Age Palestine', *Tyn Bul* 46, no. 2 (1995): 207-17; idem, 'Books in the Late Bronze Age in the Levant,' in *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East*, ed. S. Izre'El, I. Singer, R. Zadok (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), pp. 171-81; Aaron Demsky, 'Literacy', *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. E. M. Meyers (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 362-69; Richard S. Hess, 'Literacy in Iron Age Israel', in *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of 'Biblical Israel'*, ed.

---

V. P. Long, D. W. Baker, and G. J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 82-102. Cf. the detailed historical reconstruction of literacy in William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

9 An ostrakon is a fragment of pottery (a sherd), which has some sort of inscription.

10 A bulla is an oval or round clay seal (with the name or symbol of the owner). Bullae were usually used to seal papyrus documents and were attached to a string that tied the papyrus scroll.

11 Climate also has had an effect. Very little of what was written on perishable material, like papyri, survived the natural elements.

tion to the ostraca and bullae found there, the most famous archaeological discovery undoubtedly has been the Siloam Tunnel inscription, which chronicles the securing of a water source around 700 B.C.E., as the city awaited a siege by the Assyrians (2 Kgs. 20:20; Isa. 22:9-11). The forts at Lachish and Arad also have provided finds that establish reveal governmental literary activity of various kinds.

Evidence for writing is not limited either to these administrative centres or to government documents and notations by merchants. For example, the Gezer Calendar is very likely a school-boy exercise or a farmer's notes about annual planting and harvest times (tenth century); there are the well-known graffiti of the travel stop at Kuntilet 'Ajrūd (ninth to eighth century) and of the tomb at Khirbet el-Qôm (eighth or seventh century); Lachish Letter 3 is a mid-ranking officer's protest that his senior commander has questioned his ability to read (early sixth century).<sup>12</sup>

These occasional inscriptions, and seals and other inscribed artifacts from many areas of Palestine, even from its more remote and outlying regions, all argue for a broader distribution of the ability to read and write than some are willing to admit. These data do demonstrate a range in the aptitude to write scripts (paleo-Hebrew and Aramaic) well and according to proper grammatical and syntactical rules. The question

then, of course, is how did people in such diverse places acquire at least some degree of literacy? Where did they learn to read and write?

It is here that the issue of the existence of schools surfaces. There were schools in Mesopotamia and Egypt for functionaries and the aristocracy as early as the mid-third millennium, but scholars disagree as to when and for what purpose schools might have appeared in ancient Israel. At the familial and clan levels and in towns and cities there would have been apprenticeship-type training in basic skills and trades, such as farming, animal husbandry, pottery, and leather working, but schooling for literacy has a different focus and would require other kinds of organization and resources. For those who are of the persuasion to restrict writing and formal education to a circumscribed set of scribal, governmental and mercantile classes, schools would have been concentrated in major urban centres.<sup>13</sup> If there were to be a strict analogy to the academies of Mesopotamia and Egypt, schools in Israel would have been of this sort and directed to the same kind of target audience. These would have housed the chief training centres for governmental, military, and religious personnel.

The preponderance of evidence mentioned above does not support

---

<sup>12</sup> William M. Schniedewind, 'Sociolinguistic Reflections on the Letter of a "Literate" Soldier (Lachish 3)', *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 13, no. 2 (2000): 157-67; idem, *How the Bible Became a Book*, pp. 101-3.

---

<sup>13</sup> Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, pp. 69-77; Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel*, pp. 85-113; Menahem Haran, 'On the Diffusion of Literacy and Schools in Ancient Israel', in *Congress Volume, Jerusalem 1986, VTSup* 40, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 81-95.



such an exclusive educational reality. Although the view that there was a significant school system early in the history of the monarchy may overstate the evidence,<sup>14</sup> the epigraphic data found in small towns, fortresses, and villages is hard to explain if there was schooling only for specific circles of people who resided in important cities and a few administrative posts.<sup>15</sup> This fact would in no way deny the existence of special schools for professional scribes and royal bureaucrats, the probability of corresponding degrees of literacy or changes in the extent of literacy over time, but it does raise the possibility of what might be understood as more popular, or lay, literacy.

The innovation of an alphabetic script of a relatively few symbols, as opposed to the hundreds of more complex pictographic and syllabic signs of cuneiform and hieroglyphics, would have greatly facilitated such a 'democratization' of education; no longer would someone have to dedicate years to mastering the art of writing. The alphabet was already developing in Syro-Palestine before the arrival of the Israelites in the latter half of the sec-

ond millennium, and by the eighth and seventh centuries alphabet systems were being used throughout the ancient Near East.

Along with the simpler script, more accessible and easier-to-use writing materials (such as papyrus, wooden tablets covered with wax, and tanned skins) and socioeconomic and political developments would also have aided the spread of literacy. Archaeology has discovered abecedaries that exemplify efforts by students to learn to read and write.

There is no passage in the Old Testament that explicitly mentions schools, but several verses make good sense against a background of schooling experiences. Isaiah 28:9-13 seems to base its mockery of Judah's leadership on repetitive school exercises for children. A number of other passages appear to allude to the teacher-student relationship (e.g., Ps. 119: 97-100; Prov. 5:12-13; 22:17-21; Isa. 50:4). What is more, the biblical text assumes a degree of literacy and literary production among the people of Israel from the earliest times.<sup>16</sup> A brief sampling must suffice.

Yahweh himself writes with his finger on tablets, which were to be deposited in the ark of the covenant for all the people (Exod. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1; cf. Exod. 32:32). The Torah on several occasions is

---

14 Lemaire, 'Education (Israel),' pp. 307-11; idem, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël*, OBO 39 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981); E. W. Heaton, *The School Tradition of the Old Testament: The Bampton Lectures for 1994* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

15 G. I. Davies, 'Were There Schools in Ancient Israel?' in J. Day, R. Gordon, and H. G. M. Williamson (eds.), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 199-211; Demsky, 'Literacy,' pp. 365-67.

---

16 Even those who hold that widespread literacy was a late phenomenon acknowledge this textual expectation, but their negative assessment is largely determined by assumptions about dates of composition and by whether later cultural realities have been inserted into those accounts.

described as a 'book' (*sēfer*), that contains the laws that Israel is to know and obey (Deut. 29:20; Josh. 1:8; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 2 Kgs. 14:6; Jer. 25:13; Dan. 9:11, 13). Moses is told to write down an account of the battle against the Amalekites (Exod. 17:14); husbands could produce certificates of divorce (Deut. 24:1-3); different people are said to compose documents of various kinds (e.g., Judg. 8:14; 2 Sam. 11:14-15; 1 Kgs. 21:8-9; 2 Kgs. 10:1, 6-7); genealogies were created and consulted for various sundry purposes (Num. 11:26; Neh. 7:5-64); and narrative accounts mention other contemporaneous written sources, like the Book of Jashar (Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18) and the annals of the kings of Israel and of Judah (e.g., 1 Kgs. 11:41; 22:39; 2 Kgs. 1:18; 20:20; 24:5), to which readers or listeners can go for more historical information.

By the eighth century at least some of the kings (Isa. 38:9; cf. 1 Kgs. 4:32) and prophets (Isa. 8:1; 30:8; cf. Jer. 36:2; Hab. 2:2) could write literary compositions. Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer. 29:1) and signs a deed of sale for property in Anathoth (Jer. 32:10). Nehemiah and others write and seal an agreement (Neh. 10:1 [Eng. 9:38]); Mordechai and Esther send letters to Jews throughout the Persian Empire to announce the celebration of Purim (Esther 9:20-23, 29-30). The Old Testament mentions secretaries and scribes throughout the history of the monarchy (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:17; 20:25; 1 Kgs. 4:3; 2 Kgs. 18:18; 22:3; Jer. 36:4, 12). These passages attest to many kinds of writing, from the administrative and political to the mundane.

Probing the extent of literacy in

Israel serves to situate the textual data about theological education in the Old Testament more realistically within the life world of that ancient socio-cultural setting. There would have been theological education going on within the family under parental tutelage at the sanctuaries during the festivals as people of all ages rehearsed historical traditions and participated in sacrificial ceremonies; in formal training programs for religious personnel (Levites and priests); with some of the prophets as they gathered disciples (e.g., 2 Kgs. 2:3, 5, 7, 15; Isa. 8:16); and as part of the development of young students under certain wise men. Multiple kinds of theological education would have been going on simultaneously all over Palestine and at various levels of schooling. The increase and spread of literacy over time would have continually modified the picture of theological education as well. By the time of Ben Sira, two centuries before Christ rabbinic schools (*ḥêṭ-midrāṣ*), centred around the synagogue, had come into being (Ecclus. 51:14-28).<sup>17</sup>

Theological education in Israel occurred and developed *within and as part of a broader educational context* in specific times and places and for diverse groups of people. Although the circumstances differ today, the challenge to provide access to theological education of multiple configurations and with varying degrees of formality and academic rigour continues. The Old Testament is a witness, then, to important educational realities; it is

---

<sup>17</sup> See Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World*, pp. 23-48; Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, pp. 90-93.

not simply a divine depository of disembodied principles for the grand enterprise of training the people of God. Theological education is also about pragmatics.

### The Educational Significance of the Old Testament Canon

Another manner in which the Old Testament illuminates theological education can be found in the canonical shape of the Hebrew canon itself.<sup>18</sup> At first glance, this might seem to be an odd way to approach the topic at hand. Each part of the canon, however, does tend to utilize a certain set of genres and exhibit its own unique tone and orientation. Each part can help theological educators appreciate in fresh ways dimensions that should be integral to all theological education. It is not uncommon for educators and theological systems (whether consciously or not) to be drawn to one of the three to the exclusion of the other two, but together they provide a holistic view of the educational task.

The Protestant Old Testament typically is divided into four parts: the Pentateuch, the Historical Books (Joshua—2 Chronicles), the poetic and wisdom literature (Job—Song of Songs), and the Prophets (Isaiah—Malachi).<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the Hebrew Bible is a tripartite collection. It consists of the Torah (the Pentateuch), the Prophets (Former and Latter

Prophets), and the Writings.<sup>20</sup> We will take a brief look at each in turn.

For many, the Torah is simply the assembly of laws of ancient Israel. A more narrative approach, though, corrects such an understanding. The Law is given to Israel at Sinai (Exod. 19ff.) and repeated before the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Deut.)—that is, after the Exodus (Exod. 14). The Law, in other words, was never intended to be the means of attaining redemption; that had come with the miracle at the Sea. Instead it details how to live as the redeemed people of God and in so doing presents a comprehensive framework of an alternative culture and society to what they had left behind in Egypt and to what they would encounter in Canaan.

Accordingly, Torah deals with a host of issues, like family (whom to marry, how to raise children, relationships between family members, etc.), food and dress codes, parameters for selecting leaders (the king, judges, prophets, religious personnel), legislation for dealing with the unfortunate (the poor, widows, orphans, and the alien), the handling of property and debts, and the proper administration of justice. The Law is designed to produce a community that will be Yahweh's instrument to bless the nations of the world. It provides a model of how to incarnate the values that God desires for all humankind in every sphere of life, and the goal is that they

---

<sup>18</sup> Note esp. Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> Roman Catholics, of course, would add the Apocrypha.

---

<sup>20</sup> The Former Prophets consist of Joshua to 2 Kings, except for Ruth; the Latter Prophets, of what are called the Major and Minor Prophets, except for Daniel. The Writings include the rest of the Old Testament.

recognize this contribution of this unique people (Deut. 4:5-8; cf. Gen. 12:1-3).<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, there are some similarities between the laws of Israel and others in ancient Near Eastern law codes. This should not be surprising, since all are dealing with common human concerns. Nevertheless, what makes Israel's laws special is their grounding in the Exodus and in the very character of God.<sup>22</sup> From this perspective, to obey Torah is to construct a different kind of existence as a testimony of a life of holiness and obedience under the sovereign providence of Yahweh.

The lesson for today is that theological education must consider its role in the creation and the nurturing of a lifestyle, both as individual believers and as gathered communities, that is separate *from* the world—even as it is *for* the world as witness. The Christian church does not do this in imitation of the Law in the twentieth-first century, but the challenge is to know how best to incarnate God's ideals for our time in various settings around the globe.<sup>23</sup>

If Torah is designed to establish the identity of God's people in a broad sense, the Former and Latter Prophets examine how well they actually accomplished that task. Were the United and Divided Monarchies truly different in their ideology and practices from the surrounding countries? Did they fall into that ancient theological trap of conceiving of Yahweh like every other national deity, as the one who above all would protect their government and society? Was the Yahweh of the historical writers and prophets the same god who was being worshipped at the national shrines? The answers to these questions are obvious to anyone who knows the Old Testament. A few passages from the book of Amos illustrate this critical stance.<sup>24</sup>

The prophetic book begins with the Oracles against the Nations (chaps. 1-2). Each nation is condemned for cruelty in warfare. The Judah and Israel oracles (2:4-16) do not cite those same atrocities, but the shared opening formula ('for three transgressions, no four...') inexorably connects them to the other peoples (cf. 9:7). Israel, Amos's principle target, is unique because of its calling, and so its society is more damnable before Yahweh (3:1-2). What is worse, Egypt and Ashdod are called to view Israel's sin and judgment (3:9)... no 'light to the nations' here! The denunciation of Israel's religion is especially sharp.

---

21 Note Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); cf. M. Daniel Carroll R. 'Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis', *BBR* 10, no. 1 (2000): 17-34.

22 Leviticus 19 is a good example of how these motivations for ethics are utilized.

23 Though not everyone will agree with his critical positions, John Rogerson's interaction between natural morality, imperatives of redemption, and structures of grace (his labels) is helpful at this point. See his *Theory and Practice in Old Testament Ethics*, edited and with an Introduction by M. Daniel Carroll R. (JSOT Supplement Series, 405; London: T. T. Clark, 2004).

---

24 Cf. M. Daniel Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos: Prophetic Poetics in Latin American Perspective* (JSOT Supplement Series, 132; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

Israel is full of religious activity, but Yahweh detests it because it is disconnected from justice (5:21-24). Their ceremonies of celebration have nothing to do with the national realities of hunger, drought, harvest failures, and war. They do what they like at the sanctuaries; now they must get ready to meet him as he truly is (4:4-13). In fact, his judgment would begin with the temple and its personnel; Yahweh will not allow himself to be manipulated as the divine guarantor of the policies and reigning ideology of this sinful state (7:10-17; 9:1). Beyond that judgment lay the hope of another society, which would be based upon the 'fallen tabernacle of David' not upon the house of Jeroboam (9:11-15).

This kind of message is repeated throughout the prophetic books: denunciation of the government and society of that time and the announcement of a new beginning beyond that disaster. The lesson for theological education today is that it must be relevant to the modern world, teaching students to be aware of the sin in their societies in all of its manifestations and destructive perversions in social structures, economic arrangements, policy decisions, political ideologies, and religious practices. At the same time, they must see that the redemption of God through Jesus Christ, in its final and fullest manifestation, will be as broad and all-encompassing as that sin. World realities make it imperative that theological education provide helpful tools to enable students to analyse their context and to proclaim a message of comprehensive hope to a lost humanity.

For their part, the Writings offer many different windows into human

existence. There we find the joys and sorrows of the soul and worshipping community (Psalms), deep questioning of our sufferings (Job, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations), the ways of romance (Song of Songs, Ruth), the call to discern the moral fibre of daily existence (Proverbs), the trials of rebuilding a culture (Ezra-Nehemiah), and much more. These books provide many opportunities to probe the meaning of every dimension of human life before Yahweh.

In sum, the Old Testament *as canon* is a largely untapped mine of truth for theological education. It is a tangible reminder that theological education must be intricately connected to all of life so that the people of God might fulfil their calling in the world.

### Theological Education within a Missional Context<sup>25</sup>

Educators from around the globe have argued that evangelical theological education should be based on and train for the church's mission.<sup>26</sup> A favourite passage for Old Testament theological education, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, also substantiates this point. These verses have often been used to emphasize the

---

<sup>25</sup> This section is based on my longer article: 'La Ética y la educación teológica: Fundamentos y sugerencias', *Vox Scripturae* 10, no. 1 (2000): 29-49.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., C. René Padilla, *Nuevas alternativas de educación teológica* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Pieter F. Thieron, 'Theological Training for Social Transformation in Africa', *Missionalia* 23, no. 1 (1995): 45-56; Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*.

function of the family and the importance of the confession of faith. With this, of course, we readily agree, but they also hint at other crucial issues for theological education.

This passage neatly divides into two parts, vv. 1-3, 4-9. The first begins with Moses stating that he has been commanded to teach the people ‘the commands, decrees, and laws’ (v. 1). These terms link this passage to earlier ones, such as the Ten Commandments (5:1; cf. 4:1-2, 5:27-33, etc.).<sup>27</sup> But the connections are not limited to the immediate context. The lexical links go back as far as Genesis. The verbal root in v. 3 ‘go well’ (*tôb*) echoes the term ‘good’ (*tôb*) of the creation account, and ‘increase greatly’ (*râbâ*) echoes the command of Genesis 1:28, 8:17, and 9:7. The ‘land flowing with milk and honey’ is another paradise that will be graced with the presence of God (Gen. 2-3).

This correlation with the opening chapters of Genesis reveals that the life of Israel in the Promised Land is to be a microcosm of God’s intentions for humanity. What he would have wanted of all peoples is to be modelled by this chosen people. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 is related to the broader history of humankind and God’s plan for the world. It explains how Israel is to fulfil its mission: for generation after generation to fear Yahweh in order to enjoy

his hand of blessing before the nations (once again note Deut. 4:5-8).

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 begins with the *Shema*. This call to ‘hear’ involves more than the physical act of hearing; it assumes obedience.<sup>28</sup> It is not a passive reception of the word of God, but rather a call to commitment to the demands of the covenant. This call is followed by the proclamation of the uniqueness of Israel’s God: ‘Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone.’<sup>29</sup> A proper understanding of the person of God is the basis of faith and obedience. Verse 5 reveals that Israel is to love him.

‘Love’ (*’āhab*) in Deuteronomy describes Yahweh’s commitment to his people and what he desires of them (5:10; 7:9, 12-13; 10:12, 19; etc.). It is a word that in the ancient Near East was used to express a vassal’s obedience to his sovereign<sup>30</sup> and complements the verb ‘fear’ of the first part (*yārē*, v. 2); both terms communicate willing and total (note the repetition of ‘all’ in v. 5) submission to the covenant

---

<sup>27</sup> For more structural details, see the commentaries. For the placement of ch. 6 within the narrational movement of the book, note J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 67-98.

---

<sup>28</sup> For the vocabulary of learning in the Old Testament, see Wilson, ‘Education in the OT,’ pp. 562-63; Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel*, pp. 115-203; Nili Shupak, ‘Learning Methods in Ancient Israel’, *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 3 (2003): 416-26.

<sup>29</sup> For interpretive options, in addition to the commentaries, see S. Dean McBride, Jr., ‘The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5’, *Int* 27, no. 3 (1973): 273-306; Daniel I. Block, ‘How Many Is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4-5’, *JETS* 47, no. 2 (2004): 193-212. Both articles provide a wealth of bibliographic data on this and other issues related to the passage.

<sup>30</sup> W. L. Moran, ‘The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy’, *CBQ* 25, no. 1 (1963): 77-87.

relationship.<sup>31</sup> These demands of the covenant are not to be a dead letter but rather a part of the innermost being ('on your heart', v. 6). It is only from this depth of relationship and understanding that one can communicate the divine truth to others across generations, who also will need to make a decision for Yahweh.<sup>32</sup> Theological education, therefore, must focus on the person of God and proper responses to his person and demands.

Four other principles flow from vv. 7-9. The verb 'repeat' (*šānan*) in v. 7 means that this teaching should be a continuous exercise (cf. 11:19).<sup>33</sup> This also is emphasized structurally with two merisma: all day and in every place. Second, to use educational terminology, the process will have informal aspects. While other passages

delineate what would be done more formally in the structured times in the home and at the sanctuaries, this verse points to more spontaneous teaching moments during a day's activities. A related third point is that, therefore, theological education should naturally deal with every sphere of human existence into which students will come into contact.

Fourth, to educate in Deuteronomy is to learn to express an identity. The binding on the forehead and the mark on the doors of the home and the gates of their towns were clear covenant markers before others. In other words, the internal reality that these verses seek to inculcate is to be a reality that all could see as well. Deuteronomy 6:20-25 demonstrates that part of that identity was an historical consciousness of what God had done in the past in their forefathers' pilgrimage of fulfilling their mission. This law is even for Israel's kings. Note that the strictures placed on them contradicted the prevailing political ideologies regarding the manifestations of power (war chariots, harems, and extravagance) with the call to have and read his own copy of the Law (Deut. 17:14-20). The king, above all others, was to exemplify what it would mean to incarnate in visible ways the ideals of God (note the allusion to Deut. 6:5 in the evaluation of Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:25). The king of Israel was to be different, because of

---

31 'With all your heart and with all your soul' (NIV) appears several times in Deuteronomy (4:29; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2,6,10). The final phrase ('with all your strength'—NIV) is used only here, thereby emphasizing the uniqueness and force of this command. For its possible meanings, note the references in supra, n. 30. This fuller series of phrases appears again only in 2 Kgs. 23:25 in an evaluation of Josiah.

32 Note the constant importance of 'children' and 'today' throughout the book.

33 Based on a homonym, some versions translate this verb as 'impress'. See the discussion in *NIDOTTE* 4:195-98 (cf. NJB, NRSV). This verse is the basis of the Jewish tradition of reciting the *Shema* twice daily. The recitation actually includes Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41, and several benedictions. See Louis Jacobs, 'Shema, Reading of', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), vol. 14, cols. 1370-74 (cf. Mishnah *Berakot* 1:1-3:6).

his unique identity as the leader of the chosen people.<sup>34</sup>

This final point reinforces, as does this entire passage, that theological education plays a part in the complex process of shaping the people of God—their identity, character, and way of life—before and within the world.

Deuteronomy 6 teaches that this education ultimately is for mission.

### Conclusion

This essay has had as its goal to introduce the reader to a few of the many possible contributions that Old Testament studies can make to theological education. There is much to learn from archaeology, the canonical shape of the Hebrew scriptures, and the exposition of key texts. Each of these sources can help inform the purposes, content, and method of the educational process so that it might empower the Christian church in fresh ways to fulfil the daunting, but rewarding, task of being the people of God in the world today.

---

34 J. G. McConville, 'Law and Monarchy in the Old Testament', in *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically*, ed. C. Bartholomew, A. Wolters, and J. Chaplin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 69-88; cf. Walter Brueggemann, 'The Case for an Alternative Reading', *Theological Education* 23, no. 2 (1987): 89-107.

## Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership

Walter C. Wright

In this book Walter Wright presents mentoring as an important strategy for leadership renewal and development – a natural corollary of relational leadership. This is the story of one leader's journey into mentoring – the mentors who influenced his journey and the mentorees who learned with him.

Written for ministers, housegroup leaders and church leaders at every level, *Mentoring* discusses the making and shaping of a leader in an easy accessible style.

**Walter C. Wright** is Executive Director of the De Pree Leadership Centre at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena. He is also the author of the international best-seller *Relational Leadership*.

*Mentoring brings the heart of relational leadership into practice with great sensitivity and deep insight borne from both personal experience and study.*

Pap Patterson, Program Director, Warm Beach Christian Conference Center

ISBN: 1-84227-293-4 / 198x130mm / 196pp / £7.99

**Paternoster**

**9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK**



# Making Disciples and the Christian Faith

Sylvia Wilkey Collinson

**KEYWORDS:** *Individual, relationships, community, church, freedom, accountability, mission, schooling, belief*

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH community understands its prime directive from Jesus to be the making of disciples. It holds this model of teaching in high esteem because it was the specific form favoured by him in developing the leaders who would proclaim his message to humanity and establish his church across the Roman Empire. However, in present day church life, it appears the dominant models of teaching rarely include it. When people refer to teaching and learning they usually have in mind a schooling model. Protestant circles have largely ignored discipling. Where it has been practised, it has sometimes been misused or left mainly to a well-meaning but untrained laity.

When 'discipleship' is discussed, the word is used (1) to encourage a particular lifestyle or (2) to refer to the relationships between Jesus and his disciples and to construe similar actions as appropriate for followers today or (3) to help establish new believers in the faith by the exercise of Christian 'disciplines'.<sup>1</sup> However, it seems that more searching theological, philosophical or educational questions about discipling have rarely been asked.

## The Nature of Discipling

This paper is part of a larger investiga-

---

1 E.g., Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980) lists the Christian disciplines as meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

---

*Dr Sylvia Wilkey Collinson, PhD (Murdoch), M.Ed. (Sydney), BAHons (London School of Theology) is Dean of Students and part-time New Testament lecturer at Morling College, Sydney, Australia. She has been a teacher, associate pastor, vice principal of the Bible College of South Australia, and has been involved extensively with Scripture Union in voluntary ministry, administratively and in preparing Bible readings. She has a strong passion for building discipling relationships within the faith community. She has contributed to The Women's Study New Testament (Marshall Pickering, 1995), IVP Women's Bible Commentary (InterVarsity, 2002) and Journal of Christian Education, Vol. 43, No.3, Dec 2000. "Making disciples: An educational strategy for use beyond the time of Jesus?" This paper is adapted from the published version of her doctoral dissertation, Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church (Paternoster, 2004), and is used with permission.*

tion into these questions<sup>2</sup> in which we have looked at the Greek background to the word 'disciple' (μαθητής), the activities of Jesus and the practices of the early church. These were then tested against other models of education so that in the discovery of similarities and differences the concept of discipling might be clarified and refined. It was discovered that the discipling model of teaching has six components.

- *Relational*—An essential component within Christian discipling is a close loving relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ultimately he is the Lord, the master discipler. The second constituent element of relationship in discipling is that between the person (or persons) teaching and the learner (or learners). Discipling requires that this relationship be voluntary, committed to the long term and of a close, loving nature.
- *Intentional*—Discipling is not pure friendship. The purpose of the relationship is that teaching will take place and that learning will occur. It requires a commitment to that purpose from all parties involved.
- *Mainly Informal*—Although it is agreed that some formal teaching is frequently necessary, the main teaching methods employed will be informal (life-related), not neces-

sarily requiring buildings, institutions, professionally trained teachers, classes, compulsory graded curricula or formal assessment.

- *Typically Communal*—The regular, committed, gathering together of individuals and small groups of learners into a larger, nurturing community of 'like-believing' people is of great importance. Differences in gender, age, ethnicity, social background and educational achievement, rather than causing division, are intended to enrich the learning dimension of all members of the community.
- *Reciprocal*—No one person is always teacher or always learner. Although some may have a gift of teaching (*didaskō* teaching) which they frequently use, or superior knowledge or skills which they seek to impart at a particular time, all members of the community have a responsibility for enriching and contributing to the upbuilding (*oikodomeō* teaching) of others. This is achieved in part by the exercise of their own spiritual gifts and the example of their faithful, Christlike living. Learning thus becomes a mutual, collaborative affair.
- *Centrifugal in focus*—In the discipling model the actual learning process itself involves participants going out from the community to be involved in service and mission to the world. It does not focus on personal growth for its own achievement but in looking outward and serving others finds personal growth as a by-product. This entails cycles of action and reflection, as the matters which have

---

2 Sylvia Wilkey Collinson, *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church* (Paternoster, 2004); Sylvia Irene Collinson, 'An enquiry into the congruence of discipling as an educational strategy with the objectives of Christian faith communities', Ph.D., Murdoch University, 1999.

been learned are observed, implemented, tested and reflected upon under the light of life's reality and in association with a supportive, nurturing environment.

In sum, the refinement of these criteria ultimately gave rise to the following stipulative definition.

Christian discipling is an intentional, largely informal learning activity. It involves two or a small group of individuals who typically function within a larger nurturing community and hold to the same religious beliefs. Each makes a voluntary commitment to the other/s to form close, personal relationships for an extended period of time in order that those who at a particular time are perceived as having superior knowledge and/or skills will attempt to cause learning to take place in the lives of those others who seek their help. Christian discipling is intended to result in each becoming an active follower of Jesus and a participant in his mission to the world.

We need to check the degree to which this definition remains congruent with the Christian faith. It is necessary to limit the scope of this chapter as it could easily expand to encompass the whole of systematic theology. We have used two of the great credal statements of the church<sup>3</sup> to establish the core values and beliefs which have relevance to our present study.

Our plan is to make an assessment

of the 'discipling' model of teaching and whether it is consistent with these beliefs. Some attempt will also be made to evaluate its effectiveness in upholding the values of the Christian faith and inculcating them as part of the teaching process, especially in relation to the schooling method which has been so dominant in the history of Christianity.

## Core Beliefs of the Christian Faith

### God and humanity in personal relationship

Personal relationship finds its ultimate expression in the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one, in perfect harmony and relationship, yet moving beyond himself to create and sustain the universe. The salvific narrative in the Bible begins with the revelation of God as creator and introduces humankind as his masterpiece, made in his image and likeness (Gn. 1:26,27). The man and the woman related to God in a personal way, received his blessing and heard his communications. However, when they disobeyed his command, sin impaired their relationship with God. But God did not completely cast them off. He had a plan for the full restoration of the original relationship (Gn. 3:16–19).

The first part in that drama came when he called the patriarch, Abraham, to leave his country, kindred and father's house and go in faith to the land he would be shown. God promised that through him all nations would be blessed (Gn. 12:1–3). Abraham's descendants were God's treasured

---

<sup>3</sup> The Apostles' creed and the Nicene creed (Church of England in Australia, *An Australian Prayer Book*, p. 26, 118).

possession (Ex. 19:5,6). He loved them and rescued them from slavery in Egypt and formed them into the nation of Israel (Dt. 5:6). He entered into a covenant agreement with them, binding himself to them and in turn requiring their undivided love and loyalty. 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (Dt. 6:5).

He gave them the law, the land, leaders and kings and when they failed to keep their part in the covenant he spoke through the prophets, warning them of his judgement if they did not return to him. The Old Testament used the shepherd image to describe God's care for his people (Ps. 23; Ezk. 34:11–31). He searched for them, rescued them and brought them to a place of safety and freedom from fear. He provided more than enough for their sustenance, bound up the injured, strengthened the weak and brought justice to all. His relationship with the nation was likened to that of a husband toward his wife (Ho. 2:19), a father to his child (Ho. 11:1) or a mother bird sheltering her young under her wings (Ru. 2:12; Ps. 63:7; 17:8). These intensely personal images expressed the depth of God's love and unreserved commitment to his people.

The second part of the drama of God's relationship with humanity came when Jesus appeared on stage, as God incarnate, the dearly loved Son. He lived, worked, healed and proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom. He cared for his followers like a shepherd with his sheep. He provided for their physical needs but he also demonstrated the full extent of God's love for the world by laying down his life for the salvation of humanity (Jn. 10:1–18).

His sacrificial death on the cross made possible the restoration of God's original relationship with all who would respond by placing their faith in him.

In our earlier chapters we have seen that the close personal relationship which Jesus had with his disciples in the Gospels and which continued, albeit in a changed dimension, in the life of the early church, demonstrates something of the relationship which Christians believe that they may share with God. Although Jesus sometimes used the imagery of servant/master to illustrate his teachings, he never addressed his followers as servants. They were his friends (Jn. 15:15) whom he knew and allowed to know him (Jn. 10:14). He looked to them for support (Mk. 3:14; 14:32–41). He loved them, taught, guarded, prayed for and sent them out into the world (Jn. 17:6–19). He was much more than a human master or teacher among his disciples. After his resurrection they worshipped him as Lord and God (Jn. 20:28), and they responded to God in a prayerful relationship much more readily than had previously been the case.

Although Jesus did not refer to his followers as 'servants', most of the writers of the Epistles identified themselves primarily in that way (Rom. 1:1; Jas. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1). They chose the title to identify with his death, as the suffering servant of Yahweh and in acknowledgment of his lordship in their lives (Is. 52:13–53:12; Phil. 2:6–11).

When Jesus' physical presence was withdrawn, he promised that the Father would send his Holy Spirit to be with them forever (Jn. 14:15–26; 16:7–15). The ministry of the Spirit would be built upon, and the necessary

sequel to, that of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> He, also, was 'person' and would continue to teach them and help, encourage, comfort and be an advocate for them (*paraklētos*). He would guide them into truth. The Acts of the Apostles recounts his coming upon Jesus' assembled disciples (Acts 2:1) and his subsequent activities among the Samaritans, Gentiles, disciples at Ephesus and as guide and enabler of the missions of the apostles. The Epistles represent him as God's gift to believers, providing a pledge of their future inheritance as the people of God (Eph. 1:13–14), and giver of gifts for ministry (1 Cor. 12:7–11). 'Within persons, and within the church the Spirit is the Spirit of holiness, love, worship and praise, prayer, proclamation...'<sup>5</sup>

Is discipling congruent with these perspectives? In the light of our previous analyses of the biblical evidence it is clear that discipling by its very nature reinforces the centrality of God as sovereign Lord and Master. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who takes the initiative and calls humanity to a close, personal relationship of learning and following him. Those who respond, express their love for him in worship and prayer. They begin the lifelong task of knowing him personally, learning his will for their lives as revealed through the Scriptures and serving him through the use of their ministry gifts. Christians understand God himself to be the source and supreme example of

the values they teach. Disciples learn those values as they experience them expressed toward themselves by God. Thus love (1 Jn. 4:19), forgiveness (Eph. 4:32), holiness (1 Pet. 1:16), comfort (2 Cor. 1:4) and many other qualities are learnt directly from God who gives them to believers when he gives them himself (Gal. 5:22,23).

### The value of each individual

Equally integral to the Christian faith is the concept of the distinctive significance of each individual in the sight of God.<sup>6</sup> Every human is created in his image and deemed as 'very good' (Gn. 1:27,31), not in the sense of moral worth, but as a being who in a special way reflects the 'image' of God. The value of each individual is evident throughout the biblical revelation in the significance placed on human life from its very conception (Gn. 9:6; Is. 44:2), in care for the underprivileged, oppressed, weak or dispossessed (Ex. 22:21–27), and in the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Lv. 19:18). New Testament teaching proclaims no difference between Jew and Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal. 3:28). Jesus valued care for the least important as being the same as care for himself (Mt. 25:45), and he would not turn even a little child away (Lk. 18:15–17). God's love shown in Jesus extends to all (2 Cor. 5:14,15), and every person is unique and of worth, yet different from every other being (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11).

---

4 L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1971), p. 701.

5 G. Bingham, *The Things We Firmly Believe* (Adelaide: New Creation, 1981), p. 58.

---

6 C. Sherlock, *Contours of Christian Theology: The Doctrine of Humanity* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1996), p. 157.

Once again the discipling model is seen to be highly congruent with such perspectives in that it does not discriminate against any person. Every person within a Christian community is considered of equal worth in God's sight and is given gifts whose exercise brings good to all and assists in building up the community of faith. Even the newest member of the community or the oldest and most frail is significant. Discipling takes into consideration the level of understanding and knowledge of God which each individual possesses, his or her pace of learning and preferred style of learning. It embodies a life-centred approach to learning which combines cognitive input, personal experience and practical involvement, and is appropriate for all ages and stages of life.

When special discipling relationships are formed within the community there is no fixed hierarchy of status. Those who teach, remain in that role only while they have some superior knowledge or skills to impart. At other times a previous learner may adopt the role of teacher. Those whose gift is teaching still learn from others. Even 'a little child shall lead them' (Is. 11:6).

### The community of believers

Among the persons of the Godhead perfect community is expressed. They are in complete agreement of heart, mind, thought and will and it is into this 'community' that believers are welcomed, not as gods but as dearly loved children (Jn. 14:20,23, 1 Jn. 3:1,2). This means that the love shared within the Godhead extends out to his children who then relate in loving community to one another (Jn. 15:12). They

become a believing, confessing community which acknowledges the lordship of Christ (Mt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Philp. 2:11).

Sherlock comments that the 'image' idea has been assumed to be individual in nature, but that it actually is 'a relational and personal reality'.<sup>7</sup> Thus while each individual is important, humanity is more than a collection of isolated beings. The relational nature of the triune God leads to those in his 'image' living in relationship as covenant partners with God and each other.<sup>8</sup>

Those who relate to God in and by faith are called out (*ekklesia*) into an assembly of believers, the body of Christ (Acts 2:44–47; 1 Cor. 12:12), the household and dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:19–22), a family of brothers and sisters (Heb. 3:1), 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9). These all indicate that the gathering of believers is indispensable to the concept of belief. The church is a worshipping, serving (Mt. 25:40), living and growing community. The New Testament allows for no isolated believers (Heb. 10:24,25). Each member is important, having spiritual gifts to be used for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7) and a contribution to make to the building up (*oikodomeō*) of the body. Love and loyalty in action between members is their aim (Gal. 6:10). All members are servants of Christ together, whatever their social status, gender, age or ethnicity.

When we seek to align the concept

<sup>7</sup> Sherlock, *Contours*, p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> Sherlock, *Contours*, p. 89.

of discipling with such insights, the congruence is close. In particular, as we saw in the New Testament church in Part Three of this study, discipling is closely allied with the normal life of the community of faith. The process of learning to know God and becoming like him is one which is assisted by others in the faith community. Teaching may come through those who at a particular time have superior knowledge or skills and who seek to impart this to their fellows. It may also come from the community as a whole as it provides worthy models of life and faith or as spiritual gifts are exercised in the supportive, caring community atmosphere or as the community reflects upon its life and ministry. Those with positions of responsibility within the church are representatives of Christ, and by teaching and applying his word derive their authority from him, not themselves.

The focus of discipling is not on the teacher or the community but on Jesus the master-teacher. The process, however, involves a teacher or a teaching-learning community which performs the roles of facilitator, organizer of learning experiences and model. Thus discipling entails: an atmosphere of love and friendship, with openness between teacher and taught; pastoral care for each person's whole being to enable the development of joy and life in all its fullness (Jn. 10:10; 17:13); nurturing, guarding and protecting the learner in a 'safe' but challenging environment; and remembering his or her needs and bringing them to God in prayer.

Christian teaching emphasizes the connection between personal belief and active good works. 'Faith by itself,

if it has no works, is dead' (Jas. 2:17). By its nature discipling is a dynamic, working relationship. Disciples are involved in the learning process often in active, informal situations. They interact with the teacher or leader, with one another and among those they are serving.

### Human freedom

The Christian faith emphasizes that God has given to humanity the freedom to choose between right and wrong. Each person is a responsible moral agent. And although sin entered the world and humanity lost 'the rational power to determine [its] course in the direction of the highest good'<sup>9</sup>, people remain accountable for their actions. Individuals have the freedom to choose to live under the lordship of Christ, and are free to make choices as to their life of discipleship.

It is therefore highly significant that discipling is a model of teaching which depends upon the voluntary, willing commitment of the learner to the teacher or community and to the learning process, for an extended period of time. As with the disciples of Jesus, the freedom exists for the process to be concluded at any time, but with Jesus those who were genuine did not permanently leave. Followers today may choose to enter or leave teacher-learner relationships with others or with particular discipling communities, but in the general course of events their relationship with Christ finds expression somewhere within an

---

<sup>9</sup> L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1941), p. 248.

enduring community of faith.

It is appropriate here to comment briefly on misuses of discipling as a model of teaching. The role of discipler has on occasions been abused and this has caused some to be wary of its use. Some persons have so imitated the role which Jesus had among his followers that they have initiated their own teachings and endeavoured to exercise their own authority over learners, encouraging unthinking obedience. The Scriptures make it plain that there will be no further revelation from God. All was complete in Jesus (Heb. 1:1,2; Rev. 22:18,19). The authority which Jesus exercised belonged to him because he was divine. No human being can take it from him. Discipling is not about the exercise of personal power. Christian disciplers do not make their own disciples. They point their learners to Jesus as master. Instead of requiring obedience to the discipler, disciples in the Christian community come under the authority of Jesus' words as revealed in the Scriptures. Disciples do not give unthinking obedience to anyone. They are expected to weigh up the words and actions of a discipler or a discipling community (Acts 17:10,11) against the authority of the Scriptures, with the Holy Spirit as guide and enlightener (Jn. 14:26). Each person is responsible for his or her own decisions.

In balance, with individual responsibility is the extra accountability expected of those who have a teaching role. Teachers or discipling communities will be judged severely and their condemnation will be greater if they are responsible for others going astray (Mt. 18:6,7; Rom. 14:21) or if their teaching leads others into wrong belief

or sin (1 Tim. 1:6,7; 6:3,4; Tit. 1:11; Jas. 3:1; 2 Pet. 2:1,2).

### The mission of the church

The focus of the mission of the church is to make disciples of all nations. This commission from Jesus is recorded in a number of different forms in the Gospels and Acts (Mt. 28:19,20; Lk. 24:46,47; Jn 20:21; Acts 1:8).<sup>10</sup> The message for all time is that 'Christ...died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God' (1 Pet. 3:18). This good news is to be proclaimed to all peoples (Jn. 11:51,52; Acts 26:23; Rom. 1:5; 5:15,18,19; 1 Cor. 1:23,24; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 2:9,10).

Some believed that this mission was fulfilled by the apostles and ceased to be relevant after the passing of their era.<sup>11</sup> But history records that there have been those in every age who went out to other places to make disciples. Some deliberately chose to take the good news to those who had not

---

<sup>10</sup> The longer ending of Mark's gospel, probably attached some time before the mid-second century (C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, p. 472) contains the following, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' (Mk. 16:15).

<sup>11</sup> J. L. Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), Vol. 2, p. 495.



heard,<sup>12</sup> while others moved to new places for political, social or commercial reasons taking the message with them. From the time of William Carey (1761—1834) it has been a major factor in Protestant missionary endeavour.<sup>13</sup> The making of disciples is to be a continuing process as each generation in turn passes on the message to the next. Paul encouraged Timothy to entrust his message to those who would in turn become its teachers (2 Tim. 2:2). This is not the responsibility of a few, but of all believers.

### Congruence of Discipling

It may be concluded from the foregoing, then, that the discipling model of teaching in its focus and methods shares a high degree of correspondence with the core values and beliefs of the Christian faith. This will be compared with the schooling model to ascertain which of the two has greater congruence with foundational Christian beliefs and values.

Discipling reinforces the centrality of God as Father, Son and Spirit as supreme. It enables the believer to establish his or her primary relationship in life with him as child, friend and

indwelt learner. The relationship it promotes is close, personal and committed to God as Father, Teacher, Example, Guide, Paraclete and giver of spiritual gifts.

Discipling enables every person to be treated as an individual learner of significance, not a product of mass education. Individual differences can be recognized and addressed in the teaching-learning process. Yet individuals are not isolated. They become part of a community of other believers where they are able to develop open, caring relationships. Their community life is oriented to learning and growth in faith in Christ and, like a family, its members all have a contribution to make to the well being of the whole. There is a pattern of faith expressing itself in works of service, which develops and in turn leads to growth and learning. Opportunities to observe the example of others, remembering past experiences and reflection on present events or activities enable learning to increase. Within the community personal freedom is associated with accountability for one's life and actions and for the lives of one's fellows.

The schooling model has been widely used within the faith community, but there is the danger that it may over-emphasize the need for right belief without touching the attitudes and values behind those beliefs or the behaviours which result from them. Christian beliefs, facts and knowledge are extremely important and the schooling model has been very successful in transmitting these. Preaching and formal teaching in Christian schools, Sunday schools, church-based Christian Education programs and Bible and Theological Colleges have

---

**12** These included Patrick to Ireland (432 CE); Columba from Ireland to Scotland (521—97); Augustine to England (597); Celtic monks to Gaul, Germany and Italy (late 6th century); Boniface (680—754) to Germany; English people to Northern Europe (11th century); Dominicans and Franciscans throughout Europe, North Africa, Hungary and Middle and Far East (13th & 14th centuries); Portuguese and Spanish to the Americas (15th & 16th centuries); and Jesuits to almost every corner of the globe (16th century to the present day).

**13** Garrett, *Theology*, p. 496.

successfully passed down the basic elements of Christian belief to new generations of believers. But formal teaching alone will never communicate the full spectrum of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. That is a completely different way of life.

A personal relationship with God may receive great emphasis in formal teaching, but the relationship itself is more easily 'caught than taught'. People understand what it means by seeing and being with others who have such an experience. Classroom situations are too limited to demonstrate or experience more than a few of the attitudes or behaviours involved in being Christian. It is one thing to teach about the fruit of the Spirit,<sup>14</sup> and another thing for people to be provided with opportunities to develop these in their lives.

Something of the value of each individual is lost in the schooling model because of the groups of learners involved. It is difficult to provide for the range of individual differences which exist in any formal group of learners where set curricula or graded assessments apply. In formal situations the teacher often is the focus of attention, not the learners. Schooling's curriculum-centred approach means subject materials do not arise naturally out of the learning environment and may bear little relevance to the daily lives the learners. Learners may become receptors of information rather than active participants in the process, and frequently spiritual gifts possessed by

members of the body and given for the upbuilding of everyone, lie idle or under-utilized while those with teaching responsibilities exhaust themselves trying to meet every demand.

The formality of the schooling model can mitigate against the formation of open, caring relationships and hinder the promotion of community. Development of faith through experiences requiring its exercise is largely absent and opportunities for reflection on such times are divorced from the moment of experience and action.

The processes of schooling and discipling both involve some loss of freedom for learners but those involved in discipling have voluntarily chosen to do so, whereas some of those involved in schooling may be offered no choice in the matter.

Discipling's emphasis on the mission of the church is not reflected strongly in the schooling model. Learners may be formally told to go out in the name of Christ in service to others, but apart from establishing schools or colleges, informal situations are usually required for them to actually implement the commission. Discipling makes that possible.

While Jesus endorsed both the formal and informal teaching models for members of the faith community by his use of them, discipling rather than schooling was the model which he commissioned his followers to use in taking his message to the world. It is a life-centred approach which they could use among future believers no matter what their nationality, gender, age, skills, resources or experience of life.

---

<sup>14</sup> Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22,23).

## Conclusions

It becomes evident that true Christian discipling is dependent on a close, personal relationship with God himself as Lord, made possible through the death of Jesus on the cross, into which the learner voluntarily chooses to enter by faith. By his Holy Spirit God enters into the life of the believer, teaches, encourages and gives gifts which are to be used for service and for building up the community of faith.

Discipling gives value to the individual whoever he or she may be. It acknowledges that believers belong to the family of God and enables the community of faith to recognize its role as a teaching-learning body. Discipling encompasses much more than the impartation of 'head knowledge' beliefs, it involves the development of attitudes, values, skills and behaviours which are appropriate for all those who are followers of God.

It allows the development of close, personal relationships. It embodies love, commitment, concern for all, humility and meekness. Every individual within the discipling community is a learner and is able to be used for the building up of others in loving, caring relationships. As God's word is proclaimed and obeyed, as gifts are used,

examples are demonstrated, life is experienced, free choices are made and as people are nurtured and encouraged, growth towards maturity in Christ occurs. This is the intention of the gathering and the result of the life of the faith community. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (Mt. 5:6).

Discipling has the authority of Jesus as being the model to be used for taking his message to the world. It is not optional. It is mandatory. As a model of teaching its value cannot be estimated too highly. Its distinctive strength lies in the formation of the discipling communities of faith wherever the gospel is spread. The effectiveness of the discipling community may be judged by the spread of Christianity, in spite of extreme opposition, to almost every nation in the world and by the numbers of those who hold to the faith, which have increased enormously over the last two millennia.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> 32.54% of the world's population is Christian (1,973 million adherents out of 6065.1 million total world population). Annual growth rate +1.43% (P. Johnstone, and J. Mandruk, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (International Research Office: WEC International, 2001), p. 2.

### The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

Editor: Colin Brown

A four volume set offering concise discussions of all the major theological terms in the New Testament against the background of classical and koine Greek, the Old Testament, Rabbinical thought and different usages in the New Testament.

0-85364-432-2 / 4 Volumes, total 3506pp / hb / 240x165mm / £119.99

**Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK**

# 'Now I Know in Part': Holistic and Analytic Reasoning and their Contribution to Fuller Knowing in Theological Education

Marlene Enns

**KEYWORDS:** *Field-independent/Field-dependent thinking, dialectical thinking, pedagogy, multiculturalism, globalization, cross-cultural teaching*

A WISE OLD MONK once lived in an ancient temple in Japan. One day the monk heard an impatient pounding on the temple door. He opened it and greeted a young student, who said, 'I have studied with great and wise masters. I consider myself quite accomplished in Zen philosophy. However, just in case there is anything more I need to know, I have come to see if you can add to my knowledge.'

'Very well,' said the wise old master. 'Come and have tea with me, and we will discuss your studies.' The two seated themselves opposite each other, and the old monk prepared tea. When it was ready, the old monk began to pour

the tea carefully into the visitor's cup. When the cup was full, the old man continued pouring until the tea spilled over the side of the cup and onto the young man's lap. The startled visitor jumped back and indignantly shouted, 'Some wise master you are! You are a fool who does not even know when a cup is full!'

The old man calmly replied, 'Just like this cup, your mind is so full of ideas that there is no room for any more. Come to me with an empty-cup mind, and then you will learn something.'<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, to learn something it is necessary to admit one's limited knowledge with humility and to make room for the contributions of others with a

---

<sup>1</sup> Heather Forest, *Wisdom Tales from around the World* (Little Rock, Ark.: August House, 1996), p. 41.

---

*Dr. Marlene Enns is a full-time faculty on one of the campuses of the School of Theology of the Evangelical University of Paraguay where she has taught for over thirteen years. With a bicultural family background and long term involvement in missions and church work, her vocational interest and PhD research is in the area of intercultural theological education. 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.*

teachable spirit. Now it is interesting to note that this old monk not only seemed to try to teach a lesson about the pre-requisites for 'adding' more knowledge, but also about the usefulness of 'non-conventional' processes that guide to fuller knowing. Thinking that one knows a lot seems not to be the only impediment to learning and to coming to fuller knowing. Thinking that one's own reasoning processes are sufficient seems to be just as much an impediment. Similarly, when Paul reminds the Corinthians that all 'know in part' (1 Cor. 12:9-12), could it perhaps be that he also has in mind both impediments? Could it perhaps be that he is referring not only to the finite character of human knowledge, but also to the finite character of cultural ways of knowing? After all, in the beginning of the letter he mentions that Jews and Greeks have different (cultural?) criteria for validating knowledge about God (1 Cor. 1:20-25).

Most education—including theological education—is done according to the Greek analytic way of reasoning, which is often considered to be the most elaborate way of reasoning. After all, formal logic, deductive mathematics, and the theoretical nature of science are a legacy of the Greeks.<sup>2</sup> However, through holistic ways of reasoning—also present in Hebrew thought—the ancient Chinese were able to explain the behaviour of the tides, and had the knowledge of magnetism and acoustic resonance much earlier than

their Greek/European counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, recent studies in cultural variations of reasoning suggest that, 'it appears that East Asian folk psychology, as it relates to causal attribution, better corresponds to the findings and theory of scientific psychology than does American folk psychology'.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that in order to come to fuller knowing it is necessary not only to 'add' more content to what one knows, but also to use different ways of reasoning, i.e., different ways of perceiving and processing information. At least, this is what researchers who have conducted empirical studies among contemporary East Asian college populations—who tend to use holistic reasoning—and European counterparts—who tend to use analytic reasoning—seem to suggest. They propose that, 'ideal thought tendencies might be a combination of both—the synthesis, in effect, of Eastern and Western ways of thinking'.<sup>5</sup> Hence, this article will (1) give a brief description of the main differences between holistic and analytic ways of reasoning, (2) highlight the strengths of both and suggest how they can contribute to coming to fuller knowing in theological education, and (3) propose

---

2 Ara Norenzayan, 'Rule-Based and Experience-Based Thinking: The Cognitive Consequences of Intellectual Traditions. Ph.D. Diss'. (University of Michigan, 1999), pp. 2-4.

---

3 Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Physics and Physical Technology. Part I: Physics, vol. 4 (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), p. 293.

4 Ara Norenzayan, Incheol Choi, and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Eastern and Western Perceptions of Causality for Social Behavior: Lay Theories About Personalities and Situations', in *Cultural Divides: Understanding and Overcoming Group Conflict*, ed. Deborah A. Prentice and Dale T. Miller (New York, N.Y.: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), p. 257.

the pilgrim journey as a helpful way of rethinking the conceptual framework for intercultural theological education in which variations of reasoning 'aid' each other and contribute to fuller knowing.

## I Holistic and Analytic Ways of Reasoning

Nisbett and colleagues point out that for too many years psychologists have wrongly assumed that cognitive processes are the same across cultures.<sup>6</sup> They suggest that social organizations with their practices—such as those that reflect collectivistic and individualistic orientations—guide and form cognitive content and process. East Asians (Easterners) stand in the tradition of Ancient China with its social organization and practices, while European-Americans (Westerners) stand in those of Ancient Greece.<sup>7</sup> Now, how do their ways of per-

ceiving and processing information differ? Here some examples of what they found in their empirical research.

### Attention and Control

Everybody is selective and applies screening processes while attending to information in the surrounding environment. However, the above mentioned researchers suggest that people within a given culture use similar 'guidelines' for screening and processing what they perceive.

Ji, Peng, and Nisbett found that East Asian populations coming from China, Korea, and Japan are 'more attentive to the field and to the relationship between the object and the field', while Americans are 'more attentive to the object and its relation to the self'.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the former showed greater ability to perceive relationships within a field (covariation judgment) than the latter.

Moreover, the meaning and importance of control also seems to be influenced by culture. In the above mentioned study, Ji, Peng, and Nisbett added a control manipulation dimension (illusionary control) to the experiment. They found that Americans

---

5 Kaiping Peng and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction', *American Psychologist* 54, no. 9 (1999): p. 751.

6 Richard E. Nisbett and others, 'Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition', *Psychological Review* 108, no. 2 (2001).

7 Traditional categories such as 'Western/non-Western', 'North/South', or 'East/West' are no longer realistic ways of referring to a world that increasingly is being transformed into a global village. Nevertheless, when wanting to refer to geographical parts of the globe, the literature still uses these categories because of their practicality. In such sense they will also be used in this article. Moreover, when this article refers to differences in reasoning and uses the terms 'Eastern' and 'Western', they only indicate predominant tendencies, but not stereotypical

---

generalizations about ways in which people of these cultures reason. It also should be clarified that holistic and analytic ways of thinking are by no means the only types of reasoning. However, they do represent variations of reasoning that tend to exist in two important cultural blocks of the world population.

8 Li-Jun Ji, Kaiping Peng, and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Culture, Control, and Perception of Relationships in the Environment', *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 78, no. 5 (2000): pp. 951-52.

increased their estimated covariation when they believed that they had control over the process, while Chinese judgments slightly decreased.

### Explanation and Prediction

Since social organizations and practices influence attention and control, people also focus on different aspects and dynamics when trying to explain phenomena, events, and behaviour and when trying to make predictions about them. For instance, while researching the explanations that Chinese and American newspapers gave for mass murders, Morris and Peng found that American newspapers focused more on personal dispositions such as personality traits (e.g., 'very bad temper'), attitude (e.g., 'personal belief that guns were an important means to redress grievances'), and psychological problems (e.g., 'psychological problem with being challenged'). However, Chinese newspapers focused more on situational factors, such as relationships (e.g.: 'did not get along with his advisor'), pressures in Chinese society (e.g., 'Lu was a victim of the 'Top Students' Education Policy'), and aspects of American society (e.g., 'murder can be traced to the availability of guns').<sup>9</sup>

Overall, East Asian people seem to hold to a complex and interactionist theory of causality by emphasizing the interaction between the object (or person) and the context (or situation).

Hence, depending on the dynamics of the situation an honest person can at times behave dishonestly, and it is not likely that this will cause surprise to people. However, European-American people hold to a more simplistic and dispositionist theory of causality by emphasizing the dispositions or traits of the person. Hence, an honest person is believed to always behave honestly regardless of the situation, and if this is not the case, it is more likely that situational determinants of the behaviour will be underestimated.<sup>10</sup>

### Relationships and Similarities versus Rules and Categories

Cultural variations of perceiving information also lead to differing ways of organizing objects, events, and people. For example, Ji and Nisbett found that Chinese students were more likely to group on the basis of some kind of relationship, either functional (e.g., pencil and notebook), or contextual (e.g., sky and sunshine), and would also justify their choice based on relationships (e.g., 'the sun is in the sky'). However, American students were more likely to group on the basis of a shared category (e.g., notebook and magazine), or a common feature (e.g., sunshine and brightness), and would also justify their choice based on category membership (e.g., 'the sun and the sky are both in the heavens').<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Michael W. Morris and Kaiping Peng, 'Culture and Cause: American and Chinese Attributions for Social and Physical Events', *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 67, no. 6 (1994).

---

<sup>10</sup> Incheol Choi and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Cultural Psychology of Surprise: Holistic Theories and Recognition of Contradiction', *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 79, no. 6 (2000).

<sup>11</sup> In Nisbett and others, 'Culture and Systems of Thought', p. 300.

### Formal Logic versus Experiential Knowledge

When making deductions about the studied characteristics of target objects and events the West has traditionally relied on logical knowledge and not allowed experiential knowledge to 'interfere' with it. However, such tradition has not prevailed in the East, where plausibility and sense experience is considered to be appropriate when engaging in deductive reasoning, since argument structure does not necessarily need to be analyzed apart from content.<sup>12</sup>

When studying university students, researchers found that Koreans relied more on experiential knowledge when evaluating the logical validity of arguments than Americans. In fact, 'the results indicate that when logical structure conflicts with everyday belief, American students are more willing to set aside empirical belief in favour of logic than are Korean students'.<sup>13</sup>

### Dialectics versus the Law of Noncontradiction

When engaging in deductive reasoning, East Asians and Westerners do not have the same commitment to avoiding the appearance of contradiction. Peng and Nisbett point out that in folk western logic—based on Aristotelian logic—rules about contradiction, such as the following have played a central role:

1. *The law of identity*:  $A = A$ . A thing is identical to itself.

2. *The law of noncontradiction*:  $A = \text{not-}A$ . No statement can be both true and false.

3. *The law of the excluded middle*: Any statement is either true or false.<sup>14</sup>

However, folk Chinese logic is based on Chinese dialecticism which can be described in terms of three principles:

1. *The principle of change*: Reality is a process that is not static but rather is dynamic and changeable. A thing need not be identical to itself at all because of the fluid nature of reality.

2. *The principle of contradiction*: Partly because change is constant, contradiction is constant. Thus old and new, good and bad, exist in the same object or event and indeed depend on one another for their existence.

3. *The principle of relationship or holism*: Because of constant change and contradiction, nothing either in human life or in nature is isolated and independent, but instead everything is related. It follows that attempting to isolate elements of some larger whole can only be misleading.<sup>15</sup>

These differences in reasoning between West and East have been pointed out for years in the work of historians, ethnographers, and philosophers. What is interesting though is that they now are supported by empirical evidence from the psychological laboratory in contemporary populations. For instance, while conducting

<sup>12</sup> Norenzayan, 'Rule-Based,' p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Nisbett and others, 'Culture and Systems of Thought', p. 301.

<sup>14</sup> Nisbett and others, 'Culture and Systems of Thought', p. 301.

<sup>15</sup> Nisbett and others, 'Culture and Systems of Thought', p. 301.



studies about resolution of social contradiction with undergraduate students at the University of Michigan, Peng and Nisbett made following finding. Chinese students tended to be compromising and to find a 'Middle Way' (e.g., 'both the mothers and the daughters have failed to understand each other'), while American responses were more likely to be non-compromising and to favour one or the other side within the conflict situation (e.g., 'mothers should respect daughters' independence').<sup>16</sup>

In a different study which investigated preferred argument forms, Chinese and White American natural science graduate students at the University of Michigan—but who were not physicists—were presented with several issues that had two types of arguments. One was logic-based and refuting contradiction and the other was dialectical. For instance, one issue dealt with the existence of God, and the logic-based argument was a variant of the so-called 'cosmological' or 'first cause' argument by Hume, while the dialectical argument applied the principle of holism, deducing the existence of God via the fact that it is necessary that there exist a Being who is above every individual perspective and who is able to see the 'whole', the truth. The findings indicated that American participants preferred the logic-based arguments, while the Chinese participants preferred the dialectical arguments even for scientific issues.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Peng and Nisbett, 'Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction'.

<sup>17</sup> Peng and Nisbett, 'Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction'.

## II Allowing Holistic and Analytic Reasoning to 'Aid' Each Other in Theological Education

Theological Education has entered an exciting era in the twenty-first century, an era in which cultures impinge on one another in unprecedented ways. In fact, Ionita affirms that 'monocultural contexts hardly exist anymore', and encourages seeing cultural differences 'as a source for sharing among one another and as mutual enrichment'.<sup>18</sup> Hence, if rationality were seen—in Hiebert's words—as 'a many-splendored thing',<sup>19</sup> if holistic and analytic variations of reasoning were taken seriously how could they contribute to a mutual enrichment in order to come to fuller knowing in theological education? Before exploring some answers for this question it will be helpful to highlight in a more detailed way the strengths of both types of reasoning.

### Strengths of Holistic Reasoning

Research indicates that East Asians have a tendency to attend more to the total picture of the environment or the field. For instance, Masuda and Nisbett concluded their study by saying:

Japanese may simply see far more of the world than do Americans. Japanese were able to report as

---

<sup>18</sup> Viorel Ionita, 'One Gospel and Diverse Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Mutuality', *International Review of Mission* 86, no. 340/341 (1997): pp. 54, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), p. 87.

much detail about the focal objects as Americans were, but could report far more about the background and about relationships involving inert background objects.<sup>20</sup>

They also realized that Japanese seemed to 'bind features' in such ways that they formed a blended representation which differed from the two features separately. Park, Nisbett, and Hedden summarise their research findings in similar words: '(T)he evidence suggests that Asians, relative to their western counterparts, are more likely to integrate target information with contextual information and excel at observing relationships that require integrative skills.'<sup>21</sup>

Hence, it is no wonder—as pointed out in the introduction—that researchers make comments such as, '(I)t appears that East Asian folk psychology, as it relates to causal attribution, better corresponds to the findings and theory of scientific psychology than does American folk psychology.'<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, in light of their findings, Ji, Schwarz, and Nisbett suggest that 'collective cultures have more detailed representations of mundane behaviors available in memory than do members

of individualistic cultures.'<sup>23</sup> They suggest the following explanation for this finding:

(C)ollectivist cultures put a premium on fitting in, which requires considerable monitoring of both one's own behavior and that of others to avoid inappropriate conducts. Hence, Chinese respondents... [obliterate] the need to use an estimation strategy.<sup>24</sup>

This close monitoring of behaviour, as well as the ability to correlate many variables at the same time and to perceive relationships in the field (covariation judgment) is closely related to dialectical thinking. In fact, East Asian dialectical thinking seeks for a middle way in the resolution of social conflicts, relies on the 'whole picture' when providing a rationale for an issue, tolerates apparent contradictions, and takes into account many variables when making decisions.<sup>25</sup> Hence, Peng

---

20 Takahiko Masuda and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Attending Holistically Versus Analytically: Comparing the Context Sensitivity of Japanese and Americans', *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 81, no. 5 (2001): pp. 933-34.

21 D. C. Park, R. E. Nisbett, and T. Hedden, 'Aging, Culture, and Cognition', *Journal of Gerontology* 54B (1999): p. 3.

22 Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett, 'Eastern and Western', p. 257.

---

23 Li-Jun Ji, Norbert Schwarz, and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Culture, Autobiographical Memory, and Behavioral Frequency Reports: Measurement Issues in Cross-Cultural Studies', *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 26, no. 5 (2000): p. 7.

24 Li-Jun Ji, Schwarz, Nisbett, 'Culture, Autobiographical Memory, and Behavioral Frequency Reports', p. 7.

25 The researchers acknowledge the fact that dialectical thinking is not totally alien to western thinking. Plato and Aristotle used the dialectical method of reasoning, Kant and Hegel were the first to differentiate dialectical reasoning from formal logic, Marx and Engels used materialistic and dialectical perspectives to analyse society, Habermas and Goldman proposed dialectical argumentation for interpersonal discourse, and Tetlock has used it to differentiate levels of integrative complexity in people while they reason and make deci-

and Nisbett suggest that this type of reasoning 'may be preferable for negotiating intelligently in complex social interactions'.<sup>26</sup> After all—Peng and Ames remind their readers—Kant 'maintained that logical reasoning is very effective within the confines of science, but "all the worse for the beyond"'.<sup>27</sup>

In the area of religion and theology, the following observations are made by Asian theologians. Chang points out that often a non-linear approach to the Bible—which is an Asian preference—is able to capture better its complexity. In fact, while making reference to Alonso-Schökel, he emphasizes that, 'propositional statements, commonly regarded as a higher form of expression, are actually a truncated form. They are less holistic'.<sup>28</sup>

In a similar way, Lee suggests that over against western compartmentalization and fragmentation, 'in Asia religion is believed to provide a compre-

hensive system which enables us to perceive humanity, nature and the universe'.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Asian thinking also does not dichotomize between subject of research and object of learning. In fact, Lee points out that the translation of *theology* in East Asian countries is *shinhak* (*shin* meaning God and *hak* meaning learning), and hence, he summarises the characteristics of Asian *hak* as follows: '(T)he subject immerses into the object of learning, not to obtain theoretical knowledge but to internalize and personify the object through awakening and orthopraxis'.<sup>30</sup>

This observation seems to be a good contemporary illustration of what Munro meant while summarising the difference between early Platonists and Confucians: '(T)he Platonists were more concerned with knowing in order to understand, while the Confucians were more concerned with knowing in order to behave properly toward other men [*sic*].'<sup>31</sup> And in consonance with what this article is suggesting about the consequences of perceiving and processing information in different ways, Lee points out that 'the "otherness" of Asian style of doing theology can be found in its methodology to perceive and comprehend Christian truth beyond logic and rationality'.<sup>32</sup>

---

sions. But, they say that while 'there are clear similarities between Eastern and Western dialecticism,... the differences may be great enough that using the same term for both may prove to be more confusing than helpful'. Kaiping Peng and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Dialectical Responses to Questions About Dialectical Thinking', *American Psychologist* 55, no. 9 (2000).

**26** Peng and Nisbett, 'Culture, Dialectics', p. 751.

**27** K. Peng and D. Ames, 'Dialectical Thinking, Psychology Of', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (New York: Elsevier, 2001), p. 3634.

**28** Peter Chang, 'Steak, Potato, Peas and Chopsuey: Linear and Non-Linear Thinking in Theological Education', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 5, no. 2 (1981): p. 283.

---

**29** Moonjang Lee, 'Identifying an Asian Theology: A Methodological Quest', *Asia Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (1999): p. 269.

**30** Lee, 'Identifying an Asian Theology', p. 271.

**31** Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 54.

**32** Lee, 'Identifying an Asian Theology', p. 272.

### Strengths of Analytic Reasoning

Now, what are the strengths of European-American or western ways of reasoning which are predominantly analytical? Masuda and Nisbett found in their studies that American participants 'made fewer mistakes than did East Asians on the Rod and Frame task, which requires decoupling objects from a background',<sup>33</sup> and hence were less vulnerable to the change of backgrounds. This suggests that Americans seemed to 'bind features' in such ways that they 'remain independently represented, but associated'.<sup>34</sup> Park, Nisbett, and Hedden summarize their research findings in similar words: 'Westerners may excel at dealing with information-processing tasks that require componential analysis and the learning and use of categorical information'.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, Ji, Schwarz, and Nisbett who studied culture and autobiographical memory in mundane behaviours—since it is less likely that meaning of mundane behaviours differs across cultures—recommend that in the future different behaviours be studied. They expect that when this is done, 'members of independent cultures may be particularly knowledgeable about behaviors that reflect personal uniqueness and achievement', and hence be less influenced by frequency scales than Chinese respondents, who—because they belong to an interdepen-

dent culture—'are particularly knowledgeable about behaviors that facilitate smooth social interaction'.<sup>36</sup>

In the area of religion and theology, Chang points out that the dominant mode in the western academic scene is linear thinking, which is 'largely analytical, objective, logical and systematic'.<sup>37</sup> This way of thinking does have its limitations. However, it also has advantages, such as objectivity in Bible study, which 'avoids the danger of reading one's own mind into the text'.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Lee, while pointing to the dangers of western 'compartmentalized theology' and the predominance that logic and rationality have in it, nevertheless says:

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.... 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.<sup>39</sup>

Other strengths could also be pointed out. However, since most of formal higher education has been done within the framework of analytical thinking, its strengths are better known. Hence, the aspects that have been highlighted will suffice for now.

---

**33** Masuda and Nisbett, 'Attending Holistically Versus Analytically', p. 933.

**34** Masuda and Nisbett, 'Attending Holistically Versus Analytically', p. 933.

**35** Park, Nisbett, and Hedden, 'Aging, Culture and Cognition', p. 933.

---

**36** Ji, Schwarz, and Nisbett, 'Culture, Autobiographical Memory', p. 7.

**37** Chang, 'Steak, Potato, Peas and Chop-suey', p. 279.

**38** Chang, 'Steak, Potato, Peas and Chop-suey', p. 286.

**39** Lee, 'Identifying an Asian Theology', p. 269.

### Building towards Fuller Knowing

When aiming at a process of allowing holistic and analytic reasoning to 'aid' one another in order to come to fuller knowing, it is not a matter of merely attempting to deparochialize horizons of people and of getting to know 'exotic' ways of reasoning. Also, it is not a matter of simply respecting cultural differences and trying to meet the needs of 'others' in multicultural educational settings. Nor is it a matter of simply acknowledging the disservice of packaging and exporting 'western' theology to other cultures, or of championing the need for contextualized theology.

Moreover, it is not an attempt to be 'incarnational,' i.e., wanting to understand culturally 'others' in order to help them in a better way. Although the desire to be incarnational has its validity, it nevertheless often has had the connotation of 'reaching out' or 'reaching down' in order to help culturally 'others' who are in need. However, the emphasis here is that all are inherently in need of being 'aided' in their way of reasoning by cultural 'others.' No one in the created order is inherently self-sufficient. Only God can 'reach out' or 'reach down' in the full/true sense of the word, and has no inherent need of the 'other'.

Hence, when aiming at a process of 'aiding' one another, it much rather points to the need of what Vanhoozer calls a 'pluralistic theology'. In his programmatic proposal for Evangelical futures—among other aspects—he rightly points out that in order to disclose the truth about Jesus Christ it took four Gospels, which articulate different aspects of the truth:

The richness... of the event of Jesus Christ calls for multiple *perspectives* to do justice to the many *aspects* of its truth. It is the many voices taken together that correspond adequately, though not necessarily exhaustively, to the reality of Jesus Christ. If this is true of the canon, might the same hold for theological traditions?<sup>40</sup>

He then suggests—in light of a concrete example—that one possible avenue to pursue the different aspects of truth is to allow different cultures to come together to interpret the Bible:

I know of at least one book in which contributors from a number of different cultures came together to interpret the Bible, not with the intent of exploring how this or that group read the text for themselves, but rather with the goal of providing a richer appreciation of the historical meaning of the text.<sup>41</sup>

Such practice—which responds to a critical realist epistemology<sup>42</sup>—may indeed be helpful to take theological education beyond colonial/positivistic and contextualization/relativistic dichotomizations. In fact, a thoughtful reading of the strengths of the holistic

---

40 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal About the Ministry and Ministry of Theology', in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 79.

41 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', p. 79.

42 A critical realist epistemology affirms the existence of objective truth, but recognizes that it is apprehended subjectively and hence in need of hermeneutical communities. See Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*.

and analytic variations of reasoning, suggests that they could help God's people in theological education transcend also the theory/praxis and objective/subjective dichotomizations. Hence, we may explore some practical suggestions for teachers and students who perceive and process information differently and who want to foster learning/research relationships that are 'aiding' in nature in order to come to fuller knowing?

### 'Aiding' for Fuller Knowing in Teaching/Learning Interactions

Space needs to be created in teaching/learning interactions if the strengths of both types of reasoning—holistic and analytic—are to contribute towards fuller knowing. This might take some readjustments, since typically western populations affirm the agentic self which takes control and is independent, while those which affirm harmony control—such as East Asian populations—value interdependence, flexibility, and adjustment.<sup>43</sup> For one group independent thinking and action is a sign of maturity, while for the other interdependent thinking and taking responsibility for the other is a sign of true community. For one group it is important to get to the point via a clear and precise logical argument, for the other it tends to be important to tell stories, to weave together contributing strings, and to speak about the whole context in which the issue is embedded in order to make a point. Both groups complement each other; however,

active listening will be required of all.

Palmer gives some good suggestions for creating space in order to hear and perceive God and others in a more effective way. He mentions activities such as beginning class sessions with a period of silence, using periods of silence in the middle of a class, teaching by questioning, and ending with corporate evaluation of how the class went.<sup>44</sup> It certainly will be important to enter the teaching/learning experience with expectant anticipation, respect, and preparation for positive surprises.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it also could require being willing to experiment with different modes of seeing and thinking, such as imagination, which Vanhoozer qualifies as follows:

The imagination is not merely the faculty of fantasy—the ability to see things not there—but rather a means for seeing what *is* there (e.g., the meaning of the whole) that the senses alone are unable to observe (and that the propositional alone is unable to state). The imagination is our port of entry into other modes of experience, into other modes of seeing and thinking, and as such is the unique and indispensable condition of participating in the communicative action of others.<sup>46</sup>

Hence, it is also important not to overestimate the value of formal logi-

43 Beth Morling and Susan T. Fiske, 'Defining and Measuring Harmony Control', *Journal of Research in Personality* 33, no. 4 (1999).

44 Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known* (New York: HarperSan Francisco, 1993), pp. 75-87.

45 Maria Harris, *Teaching and Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987).

46 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', p. 84.

cal reasoning, and to underestimate experience-based and intuitive reasoning while interacting in teaching/learning situations. Becker tries to illuminate this dynamic from different perspectives when he writes as follows:

Many Westerners may be convinced of the importance of logic, and of its superiority to emotive intuition. Yet we need to be careful not to discard those areas of human life and communication in which intuition may be extremely valuable, in our efforts to quantify and mathematize. We may agree with Habermas that an ideal-speech situation requires equality of participants, freedom from social coercion, suspension of privilege, and free expression of feeling.... But we should realize that this is at best a very Western ideal, both impractical and even theoretically inconceivable to traditionally-educated Chinese and Japanese.... [W]e should not forget the long and relatively peaceful histories they have experienced, entirely without the benefit of our methods of discussion and rhetoric. Before imposing our own models of communication upon them in another gross display of insensitivity and cultural imperialism, let us remind ourselves that our own presuppositions about ideal communications are also culture-bound.<sup>47</sup>

Argumentative debate has its place in teaching/learning interactions; how-

ever, it is often control oriented and fuelled by an 'either/or' search of truth. It does not always create space for the strengths of holistic reasoning which is more integrative and 'both/and' oriented. The voice of the control oriented is the voice that is heard most often, and often it is expected that those who are different accommodate to this type of voice. Hence, Jones considers that

what is most significant to the other's movement across the rocky terrains and borders of difference, and into the centers of power, is not the *telling*, but the *hearing* of stories. Most important in educational dialogue is not the *speaking* voice, but the *voice heard*.<sup>48</sup>

She continues to point out, that since the less dominant always hears the dominant's voice, it is the dominant members who are excluded from the dialogue, since they hear only their own voice. On the other hand, individuals with tendencies for holistic reasoning and less strong convictions may deprive others with what could be their inclinations toward a certain issue, and thereby not contribute sufficiently towards coming to fuller knowing.

When it comes to making social causal attributions—which are not absent in interpersonal relationships within teaching/learning situations—Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett point out that misunderstandings may arise when a person's behaviour is attributed to divergent causes: situational versus

---

47 Carl B. Becker, 'Reasons for the Lack of Argumentation and Debate in the Far East', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (1986): p. 90.

---

48 Alison Jones, 'The Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pedagogy, Desire, and Absolution in the Classroom', *Educational Theory* 49, no. 3 (1999): p. 90.

dispositional (i.e., personal traits).<sup>49</sup> They indicate that this is likely to happen especially when the information about a given situation is made salient. In this case individuals with analytic reasoning are more likely to attribute the cause of behaviour to personal dispositions or traits, and any inconsistency is interpreted as dishonesty or inauthenticity. Such polarizations in interpersonal relationships will not contribute to coming to fuller knowing, but rather sever the community.

Hence, it will be necessary to deconstruct prejudices and allow these differences to be illumined and corrected where necessary, so that they can lead to fuller knowing. Was Jesus perhaps trying to do this when the adulterous woman was brought to him, and he asked the accusers to analyse their own lives before casting a stone on her? Was he perhaps indicating that had they been a more caring community—and hence been with less sin—this woman would not have had a need to engage in sinful relationships? At the same time, he does not relieve the woman of responsibility, since he asks her not to sin anymore.

If this is a possible reading of the story, then Jesus was avoiding polarizations in social causal attribution and helping all involved in the incident to come to fuller knowing about themselves and about the problem at hand.

### 'Aiding' for Fuller Knowing in Learning/Research Relationships

Learning and research in theological

education—especially at the graduate level—is often guided by analytical reasoning. While engaging in reading assignments it is important to be able to detect the main argument, its supporting evidence, and then to critique it in logical and abstract terms. In research and writing it is important to define a highly specific concept, identify the literature base on which further knowledge can be constructed/added, and then to pursue it with scientific objectivity and preciseness.

There is no question about the usefulness of analytic reasoning within learning and research processes. It has generated much knowledge and also helpful knowledge. However, what would happen if holistic ways of reasoning were incorporated as valid ways of knowing? Would experiential and intuitive ways of knowing contaminate 'true' knowledge? How can knowledge that is not of the 'either/or' type or that is not tangible and measurable be evaluated? How would it affect accreditation standards?

These and more questions could and need to be raised. Most likely they would preoccupy more those with analytical tendencies of reasoning, since they usually need to know exactly where a path will take them, have more need to be in control, and are less willing to take risks. However, as cultures impinge on one another, as postmodernism calls for a review of what it means to know, and as research gives evidence of complementary differences/strengths in reasoning processes of contemporary populations the unknown path of 'what will happen if...' cannot be avoided any longer.

Moreover, if diversity is a pre-requisite for unity in the body of Christ—as

---

49 Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett, 'Eastern and Western'.



Fee points out in his commentary on the first letter to the Corinthians<sup>50</sup>—then theological education also needs to take seriously diversity of reasoning represented in the body. After all, when Paul affirms, ‘now I know in part’ (1 Cor. 13:12) it is part of the discourse about diversity and unity in the body of Christ.

So, how and where do we start if learning and research in theological education is to incorporate holistic ways of knowing alongside analytic ways? The old Kpelle proverb captures the difficulty of answering this question well: ‘I know how to begin the old mat pattern but I do not know how to begin the new.’<sup>51</sup> Hence, the following suggestions are only starters for further thought.

To allow holistic and analytic ways of reasoning to complement each other may imply that it be just as important to discern the driving forces behind a narrative as it is to discern the rationality of the narrative.<sup>52</sup> It may imply that pushing back boundaries in research happens just as much through the pursuit of new topics and of missing pieces in a topic, as through weaving together existing topics with a different pattern, or coming up with a new blend of what is there already. It may imply that intra-disciplinary research is just as necessary as inter-

disciplinary research. It may imply that to explain and predict is just as important as to point out mystery and complexity without need to come to a resolution—at least not for now.

Since research papers, theses and dissertations usually follow a very analytical way of reasoning, and there is not much precedent for how to do this type of work in a holistic way, it would be worthwhile pursuing other ways of research, such as case studies. Among other advantages, the following four—mentioned by Mullino—seem to have a close bearing on the present search for ways to allow analytic and holistic reasoning to contribute towards fuller knowing, since they require all the skills of both types of reasoning:

- [1] a case helps bridge the gap between theory and practice,...
- [2] helps persons develop skills of discernment and decision making,...
- [3] helps persons see a large, complex picture, without artificially extracting particular element,...
- [and] [4] can be used to study the dynamics of change.<sup>53</sup>

While exploring new pathways, it would, of course, be very helpful if people with different tendencies in reasoning could work as a team on a same project, research paper, thesis, or dissertation in order to get at the issues from both an analytical and holistic perspective. Individuals with the tendency to think analytically would probably be good for detailed analysis of issues/concepts, for handling abstract/

---

<sup>50</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), p. 601.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in M. Cole and S. Scribner, *Culture and Thought: A Psychological Introduction* (New York: Wiley, 1974), p. 201.

<sup>52</sup> Parush Parushev, ‘East and West: A Theological Conversation’, *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): pp. 1-2.

---

<sup>53</sup> Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1991), pp. 34-35.

theoretical concepts, as well as for conducting etic research. On the other hand, individuals with the tendency for holistic reasoning would be especially good at seeing the bigger picture, the dynamics and connections at work between issues/concepts, for dealing with concrete/practical ideas, and for giving thick descriptions while doing emic research.

Many more alternatives will arise as people in learning/research relationships work together and listen to each other with a willingness to learn from one another. After all, it is through 'journeying' together that ways are discovered. It is through acknowledging that nobody has 'arrived' that fuller knowing can be pursued. Hence, the final section of the article will suggest the pilgrim journey as a helpful metaphor for rethinking the conceptual framework of theological education which is willing to engage in processes of 'aiding' in order to come to fuller knowing.

### III Theological Education as a Pilgrim Journey: A Conceptual Framework

Pilgrim journeys were practised by God's people in the Old Testament, and by Jews and Jewish converts to Jerusalem for Passover in the New Testament. In fact, they have an international character since pilgrimages are also practised by people of religions other than the Judeo-Christian. Morgan points out that while land (sacred place) and memory (sacred traditions) tend to have a centripetal movement and contribute towards the maintenance of structure in religions, pil-

grimage (religious journey toward oneness with the transcendent) tends to have a centrifugal movement and provides an element of dynamism which gives 'marginal members of a community the opportunity to search for spiritual sustenance beyond, but not necessarily outside, the organized and orthodox boundaries of their established belief system'.<sup>54</sup>

In the New Testament, the pilgrim metaphor illustrates the resident alien and sojourner status of God's people on earth. In the educational literature the pilgrim model has been used to suggest that education rather than being a factory (behaviourist model) or a wildflower (laissez-faire model) is a purposeful life-walk in which students and teachers form an interdependent community which practises the priesthood of all believers.<sup>55</sup> This and other considerations also makes the pilgrim journey a helpful metaphor to rethink the conceptual framework for intercultural theological education, since it can illustrate well some important aspects about the knower and the knowing process.

#### Ownership of the 'Theological House of Authority'

All those who are engaged in pursuing fuller knowing in theological education are pilgrims. All have a transitory life,

<sup>54</sup> James T. Morgan, 'Memory, Land, and Pilgrimage: Roots of Spirituality', *Religious Education* 87, no. 4 (1992): p. 560.

<sup>55</sup> Jim Plueddemann and Carol Plueddemann, *Pilgrims in Progress: Growing through Groups* (Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1990); Ted W. Ward, 'Metaphors of Spiritual Reality. Part 3: Evaluating Metaphors of Education', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139, no. 556 (1982).

all are finite, and everything they are engaged in—including reasoning and knowing—is marked by finiteness. To conceive of themselves as resident aliens, foreigners, and temporary dwellers does not only help people in theological education to have a respectful attitude toward cultural ‘others’ and to be willing to learn from one another, but it also reminds them of the fact that no one is the ‘owner of the house’.

It seems easier to accept the fact that no one ‘owns the house’ when it refers to the ‘ecological house’ in which the pilgrims temporarily dwell, than the ‘theological house of authority’ in which they teach/learn together with pilgrims from other cultures. When it refers to the ‘theological house of authority’ it seems as if it were so easy for a foreign language to slip in, a language in which theological education is referred to in two categories: ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’. ‘At home’ is often the norm and ‘abroad’ usually calls for contextualization of the norm ‘at home’.

Such mentality is not appropriate to resident aliens and foreigners. Since not only some but *all* are foreigners, they practise hospitality or ‘home-making’ through transformation (Rom. 12:1-2, 9-13), and avoid conformity to society (and cultural ways of reasoning) which practises vengeance (Rom. 12:16-21) and exclusion by expecting that all conform to the prevalent norm.<sup>56</sup> Hospitality towards cultural variations of reasoning among members of the theological education com-

munity is more likely to take place if they remember that *all*—regardless of cultural background—are on a pilgrim journey as aliens and temporary residents.

### Focus of Knowing

Holistic reasoning focuses more on the field and tends to be harmony-oriented, while analytic reasoning focuses more on the target object and tends to be goal-oriented. These variations may complement one another in very helpful ways. However, they may also cause tensions. In those times it will be necessary that the pilgrims on the journey—students and teachers alike—remember that, ‘it is not we who seek the Way, but the Way which seeks us’.<sup>57</sup>

As the Way seeks the pilgrims and these concentrate on him, this also reminds them of the fact that, while they need to plan the day’s journey, they still need to be sensitive to emergent, unplanned teachable moments that he provides. The pilgrim journey or walk is ‘purposeful yet subject to the thousand-and-one revelations that emerge as the trail unfolds to meet the pilgrim’s step’.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, in similar ways to those of the Israelite pilgrims in the desert, they follow the leading of the ‘cloud of fire’ and set out or encamp not at their pace, but at the cloud’s pace, be it for ‘a long time, ... or only a few days, ... [or] only from evening till morning, ... whether by day or by night ... [whether]

<sup>56</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience: From Faithful Reading to Faithful Living* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 290.

<sup>57</sup> Linda M. Cannell, ‘Electronic Mail from Deerfield, Illinois to Ted Ward, Miami, Florida, 3 May’, (1998).

<sup>58</sup> Ward, ‘Metaphors of Spiritual Reality’, p. 297.

for two days or a month or a year' (Num. 9:19-22). After all, the metaphor of the life-walk 'fulfills the biblical teachings about human relationship, authority, and the inalienable sovereignty of God. All through Scriptures God's people are seen as strangers and sojourners, walking together with God in the lead.'<sup>59</sup>

At times—as Yob points out—the journey may even take a somewhat unpredictable and devious route. For the Israelites, the journey that could have taken mere months, took forty years, since 'progress had to be measured not only against approach to the final physical destination but also in personal and spiritual terms as well'.<sup>60</sup> This sensitive attunement of the pilgrims to the Leader of the journey allows them to handle tensions such as careful planning/respectful attendance to the surprises (and devious routs!) of the journey, or goal/harmony orientation in ways that avoid a dichotomization and allow for a dynamic interplay between them.

### Sacredness of Knowing

To conceive intercultural theological education in which there are variations of reasoning as a pilgrim journey also helps to avoid dichotomizations such as 'abstract vs. concrete' or 'rational/empirical vs. experiential/transcendental.' 'Pilgrim' journey always gives the journey a sacred character. Yob points out that, although histori-

cally it might sometimes have 'political, economic, and nationalistic overtones, the pilgrimage is essentially a religiously motivated journey. It is initiated, sustained, and guided by consideration of transcendent realities or ultimate concern.'<sup>61</sup>

Theological education as a pilgrim journey reminds all involved in it that the journey has a sacred starting point—the cross—and also a sacred ending point—the throne of the Lamb. It also reminds them that all pilgrims are holy, since all are inhabited by the Holy Spirit who teaches them. Above all, however, it reminds them that the journey is sacred because God is present among the pilgrims. He needs to be relied upon for *all* acquisition of knowledge, since all truth comes from God. The Source of truth makes all truth sacred, and thus it needs to be acted upon with fear of the Lord and worshipful obedience. In fact, it is not so much a matter of asking: 'are we grasping truth?', but rather, 'Is Truth grasping us?'

Hence, theological education as a pilgrim journey makes it possible to experience God not only while reading and studying the Torah/Bible, but also while studying 'the language and literature of the Babylonians', as was the case of resident alien students such as Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1:4), who experienced that God could give them 'knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning' (Dan. 1:17). This experiential/transcendental way of knowing certainly did not preclude their rational/empirical ways of knowing, since they were among those

<sup>59</sup> Ward, 'Metaphors of Spiritual Reality', p. 297.

<sup>60</sup> Iris M. Yob, 'The Pragmatist and Pilgrimage: Revitalizing an Old Metaphor for Religious Education', *Religious Education* 84, no. 1 (1989): p. 522.

<sup>61</sup> Yob, 'The Pragmatist and Pilgrimage', p. 251.

who showed 'aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, [and] quick to understand' (Dan. 1:4); however, it did require a communal prayerful dependence upon God with fellow resident aliens and pilgrims (Dan. 2:17-23).

Indeed, a pilgrim consciousness of God on the journey allows for insights about/from him that are not parochial; and although it sets the pilgrim apart—as Daniel who 'resolved not to defile himself' (Dan. 1:8)—it even brings kings—with whom these pilgrims interact—to a deeper understanding of God as they recognize that 'your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries' (Dan. 2:47). Surely such pilgrim behaviour and attunement to God could also help those in theological education with cultural variations of reasoning to come to a deeper and fuller appreciation of God, of what he is interested in, and of one another.

### Wholeness of Knowing

Holistic reasoning has the tendency to be praxis-oriented, while analytic reasoning to be theory-oriented. However, wise people in intercultural theological education who are on a pilgrim journey transcend the praxis/theory dichotomization. They engage in action/reflection and *live* the journey, since they acknowledge that Way, Truth, and Life cannot be separated (John 14:6). They pray, 'Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth' (Ps. 86:11), rather than, 'Teach me your truth, O Lord, and I will walk in your way.'

When reflecting about the Israelites in the desert, Job points out that 'pilgrimage was for them not an armchair

speculation but something they engaged in "in the midst of life"—indeed, this very engagement made it happen.'<sup>62</sup> She continues to point out, that, as a result,

The journey is educative in the broadest sense. According to the Exodus story, for instance, a disorderly company of self-interested people were disciplined by the rigors of the journey and personally, socially, and spiritually prepared for the final conquest of their promised land. On the way they learned the proper ways of living, worshipping, and relating.<sup>63</sup>

It is the journey itself, and the pilgrim's willingness to be transformed by the Way that makes it possible for them to engage in an 'aiding' process of holistic and analytic reasoning. The journey and the Way indeed have a transforming power on the pilgrims. But again, they experience it only if they *travel*; they cannot experience it if pilgrimage is an armchair speculation. Neither can the transforming power be experienced if pilgrims conceive their journey to be a game or a contest where the purpose is to win a competition.

Ward rightfully warns against using game or contest as a metaphor for defining the purpose of education. This view of education—he emphasizes—needs to be challenged on the grounds of Hebrew epistemology which values 'knowledge as that which is acted on'.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Job, 'The Pragmatist and Pilgrimage', p. 522.

<sup>63</sup> Job, 'The Pragmatist and Pilgrimage', p. 522.

<sup>64</sup> Ted W. Ward, 'Metaphors of Spiritual Reality. Part 1: Biblical Metaphors of Purpose', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139, no. 554 (1982): p. 109.

However, again, such a view of knowledge which transcends holistic/analytic polarizations is more likely to be valued if theological education is conceived as a pilgrim journey.

### Knowing as a Life-long Process

Lastly, wise people who are on a pilgrim journey foster an attitude of life-long learning. They never settle down before reaching the endpoint, and this endpoint is reached only when bowing before the Lamb on the throne. Hence, until then they make an effort to retain their status of pilgrims, resident aliens, and temporary dwellers—also in their reasoning processes—because to settle down is dangerous. While reflecting about the aforementioned dynamics between memory, land, and pilgrimage, Morgan makes following sobering remarks:

Even for a people who can proudly trace their roots as a wandering and persecuted people, there comes a time when the nomadic experience gives way to a more sedentary lifestyle and a stronger sense of rootedness. Once a people have 'arrived' or feel they have a home, then they learn to reenact in the comfort of their sanctuaries or homes the past dramas of escape from enslavement and suffering. Ironically, the land possesses them as much as they think they have a hold on the land.<sup>65</sup>

This is what seems to have happened to the people of Israel after 'arriving' at the Promised Land, and to wise king

Solomon after 'settling down' in the comfort of his palace and his established kingdom. But what an inspiring contrast is found in the way other wise pilgrims—such as Joseph and Daniel—end their lives, since they seemed to have never given up their way of thinking and living as resident aliens and foreigners. Hence, it is very important for the members of the theological education community to be continually 'uprooted' by cultural 'others' with their ways of reasoning, and avoid the danger of being possessed by their 'home land'. They do well to heed the advice of a life-long learner such as Ward, when he says: '(O)urs is not to "finish our education" and "settle down"'.<sup>66</sup>

### Conclusion

Theological education that has not 'settled down,' that has not 'arrived,' and is still on a pilgrim journey will welcome not only what culturally 'others' have to say, but also the reasoning process that they use to come to what they have to say, since content and process cannot be separated. To allow analytic and holistic reasoning to 'aid' one another in theological education, as this article has suggested, could guide all involved in the process to come not only to fuller knowing in a quantitative way, but also in a qualitative way. However, this will require that students and teachers alike—be they representatives of holistic or analytic tendencies of reasoning—come together with 'tea cups' that are not full. It will require the humble acknowledgment that, 'now I know in part'.

65 Morgan, 'Memory, Land, and Pilgrimage: Roots of Spirituality', p. 565.

66 Ward, 'Metaphors of Spiritual Reality. Part 3', p. 297.

# Theological Education in the Context of Socio-Economic Deprivation

Dieumeme Noelliste

**KEYWORDS:** *Socio-economic deprivation, Southern church, Northern church, development, cooperation, bivocation.*

## Introduction

As the twenty first century marches on, the southward shift of Christianity's centre of gravity continues unabated. Researchers have estimated that presently some 62% of Christians live in the South<sup>1</sup> and they expect this percentage to reach 70% by the year 2025<sup>2</sup> This trend has sparked much discussion among missions strate-

gists, and its significance continues to be assessed by students of world Christianity. The outcome of the mental energy which is being spent on the new phenomenon is uncertain at this time, but what is already apparent is that the growing concentration of Christians in the South poses an enormous challenge for theological education.

The reason for the challenge is not difficult to see. Christianity is a faith which majors on discipleship. Beyond formal profession, it requires the growth of its adherents into Christ-likeness by means of solid Christian nurture. But the socio-economic condition of the context where the Christian explosion is currently occurring places severe material constraints on the ability of theological education to produce the human resources required for the discharge of the discipleship mandate. How to transcend the limitations of the southern environment in order to secure a firm footing for theological education is one of the pressing issues

---

<sup>1</sup> 'South' refers to the poor countries of the world wherever they may be, not just those situated in the southern hemisphere where the majority of economically disadvantaged nations are found.

<sup>2</sup> Todd Johnson, Peter Crossing and Bobby Jangsun Ryu, *Looking Forward: An overview of World Evangelization 2005-2025 (A Special Report for the Lausanne 2004 Forum)* by the Centre for the study of Global Christianity, 2004 [www.globalchristianity.org](http://www.globalchristianity.org)

---

**Dr. Dieumeme Noelliste**, who grew up in Haiti and studied law at the State University of Haiti, is President of the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology and of the Jamaica Theological Seminary, and was formerly President of the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association. He holds the MDiv degree of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. and the PhD in theology of Northwestern University. He planted and pastored the Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church of Chicago, USA. He is the International Director of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), and the author of the WEF Theological Commission Monograph (No 10), *Toward a theology of Theological Education*.

that the theological education community of the developing world needs to address.

This paper enters the discussion by focusing on three constituencies which must feature prominently in any quest for the viability of theological education in the majority world: the southern church, the dispensers of theological education, and the global church. My claim is that these constituencies can contribute three critical load bearing pillars to the theological education edifice whose combined strength cannot but solidify the foundation upon which the building rests. More specifically, I venture the suggestion that socio-economic deprivation notwithstanding, theological education can find a firm footing even in the socio-economically infertile soils of the South *if it is supportively owned by the local Christian community, dispensed through an educational paradigm which is responsive to the local context, and supported strategically by the global church*. I will elaborate on this claim shortly, drawing in part on my own experience in the Caribbean context and partly on what I have been able to observe elsewhere.

However, before doing so, it is helpful to paint in broad strokes the socio-economic picture of the South by means of a brief comparative analysis of its condition with what obtains in the North<sup>3</sup>, and highlighting the challenges that this poses for theological education in the southern region.

## I. Our Socio-economically Divided World

For millennia, our world has been beset with all sorts of polarities. It has been punctuated by walls of partition which cut across all the major domains of human existence. Of all the chasms that have separated the inhabitants of our planet, the socio-economic divide has been one of the most difficult to overcome. For instance, while the ideological gulf that separated East and West for a good chunk of contemporary history has, in recent times, shown signs of shrinking, the gross imbalance in human fortune that has characterized North and South for a long time now continues to resist efforts at a rapprochement. North and South continues to symbolize a socio-economic polarity that divides the dwellers of the globe into the destitute and the well-off, the deprived and the affluent, the hungry and the well-fed, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

Recent studies on wealth distribution have highlighted the persistence of huge disparities between the two 'regions'. The 1997 issue of the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme has revealed that 'the south has an average per capita income that is a mere 6% of the North's'<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps the most astounding fact is that the combined wealth of the world's top 200 super rich is approximately eight times the combined income of over half a billion inhabitants of the least developed

---

3 Similarly, 'north' designates the developed nations of the world wherever located, even though the majority of well-to-do nations are in fact situated in the northern hemisphere.

---

4 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 24.



countries.<sup>5</sup> The inequality is further compounded by the heavy indebtedness of the southern countries to their northern counterparts and the onerous debt servicing requirements which come with it.

This enormous material imbalance would not be disturbing if it did not translate into a lavish lifestyle in one 'region' and abject poverty in the other. While it is acknowledged that no geographical sphere has a monopoly on either opulence or poverty, it is undeniable that the mass of impoverished humans are southerners. Of the percentage of the world's population who live in the developing world, some 2 billion souls live on US\$2 per day or less.<sup>6</sup> It is no wonder that each day 100,000 of the world's poor are claimed by starvation and malnutrition.<sup>7</sup>

The prospect for the future is not promising. In recent times, poverty has been on the increase in several parts of the two-third world.<sup>8</sup> What this means in concrete terms is that the untold millions of poor people who inhabit our broken world must do without such necessities of life, as basic sanitation, potable water, adequate housing, basic health services, education and a sufficient diet.

In the past two decades, hopes for

the amelioration of the prevailing state of affairs have been placed on globalization—the much touted new economic order at the heart of which is the integration of the countries of the world into a global and borderless market. The interest displayed by the developing countries in global organizations such as the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as the diligence with which many have implemented internal economic reforms clearly show that they expected much of the new world economic regime. It is perhaps too early to determine for sure whether these hopes have been misplaced. However, judging from some leading economic indicators, it appears that, so far, the experiment has not changed the situation appreciably. Studies have shown that although global export has grown considerably in recent times, trade figures for the least developing countries have registered steady decline for the past two decades.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the recent boom in capital flow has revealed a clear bias for the North. According to the United Nations Development Project, of the \$600 billion which moved around the world in direct investment in 1998, 70% went to North, 24% to some 24 southern countries and a mere 0.4% (less than \$3 billion) to the 48 least developed countries.<sup>10</sup>

In the fast growing information technology area, the situation is no different. Research has shown that by 1998 while 26% of Americans had access to

---

5 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 82.

6 World Bank, *World Development Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000/2001), p. 3.

7 Ronald Sider, *Evangelism and Social Action* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), p. 192.

8 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, p. 33.

---

9 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 2000, p.82.

10 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, p. 82.

the internet, only 0.8% of Latin Americans, 0.1% of sub-Saharan Africans and a negligible 0.04% of South Asians could afford such luxury.<sup>11</sup>

## II. The Travails of Theological Education in Socio-economically Challenged Contexts

Clearly, the unfavourable socio-economic condition which is so prevalent in the southern landscape is a formidable hindrance to the viability of theological education in that region. As Philip G. Altbach has pointed out in his insightful article on the relationship between universities in the minority world and those in the majority world, 'the infrastructures of academic development are not cheap'.<sup>12</sup> It follows that the scarcity of resources is a major inhibiting factor to the provision of quality education in the 'have not' parts of the world.<sup>13</sup> Amongst the many areas which are adversely affected by the socio-economic harshness of the southern context three have been selected for special mention here, since without them there can be no theological education.

The first people affected are students. In many third world settings, theological institutions experience serious difficulties recruiting qualified students for their programmes. Several factors account for this, many of them

socio-economic in nature. In some cases, the problem stems from the existence of too small a pool of qualified candidates to draw from. More often than not this reality is itself connected to the inability of government to allocate sufficient funds to the educational sector due to budgetary constraints.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, at times, students who are qualified to pursue higher education shun theological studies because of the dim prospect for employment that provides an appropriate income. The questionable usefulness of a home-grown theological training for the bread-and-butter issues drives many a potential theology student to secular institutions with academic offerings which hold more lucrative possibilities, or to theological institutions in the North where the pasture is perceived to be greener.<sup>15</sup> Where the latter route is taken, a sizeable percentage remains in the receiving countries.

Moreover, there is the question of affordability that many of those who choose to prepare for the ministry locally face. Although third world schools usually charge low tuition, many students have difficulty affording it. Financing theological education through loan is rare. Even where this option is available, students tend to

---

11 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, p. 82.

12 Philip G. Altbach, 'University as Center and Periphery', *Teachers College Record* 82 (Summer, 1981) p. 604.

13 Albrecht, *University*, p. 604.

---

14 Beside economic constraints, Altbach drew attention to the lingering impact of the kind of colonial educational heritage a notion received on that country's attitude toward education. See *University*, pp 605, 606.

15 It must be acknowledged that not all majority world students who pursue theological education abroad do so for economic reasons. Many go abroad because the subject they desire to study is not available in the two-thirds world.

avoid such indebtedness due to the uncertainty surrounding securing employment at the completion of their studies which can repay debts. It is not uncommon for seminary graduates who experience difficulty making ends meet at home to migrate to other latitudes in search of better opportunities, thereby contributing unwillingly to the brain drain problem with which third world countries are typically beset.<sup>16</sup>

Increasingly, the harsh economic realities are pushing students in general and theological students in particular to work while studying. Schools have responded to this trend by adjusting their schedules, typically offering courses in evenings or weekends. While the combination of work and study somewhat helps alleviate the economic problem, it puts serious pressure on the working student's ability to perform to his or her best. Even the most gifted find it difficult to respond to the competing claims placed on their time by work, family and study.

The next group of people affected are staff—both academic and administrative. Here, too, economic constraints create enormous difficulties for third world institutions. In many southern settings the expertise needed for the delivery of the theological programme is often not available locally. This limitation forces school administrators to make some hard choices. These include making do with less than the ideal, or bringing the required expertise from abroad at great cost to the struggling institution, or investing at considerable risk in staff develop-

ment.<sup>17</sup> Even where local expertise is available, the theological institution may still be unable to secure the needed help due to its inability to match compensation packages offered by the business sector or publicly funded educational establishments.

A compromise which is often used in such circumstances is to share the available expertise with other organizations. This trade-off, however, has drawbacks. The casualty of such an arrangement is sometimes the quality of programme delivery, and almost always home-grown literary output. Faculties with too many competing claims on their time seldom have time to research and write.

Another major area of challenge for most majority world theological institutions is infrastructural support for their academic programmes. Recently, a Caribbean educator remarked to me that all he needs to teach is a student, the shade of a tree and a stool. His comment was intended to make the point that in the majority world education can be provided with the barest infrastructure. He is basically right. However, provision of such bare essentials as a basic physical plant, a modest library holding, reliable administrative and instructional equipment, textbooks, the securing and maintenance of accreditation should be possible. But in a context which is not permeated by a philanthropic ethos and where there are modest tuition fees this has always proved to be a daunting challenge. Such things require enormous capital outlays which are hard to generate from the context.

---

16 Altbach, *University*, p. 609.

---

17 The risk referred to here involves the possible non-return of the personnel sent abroad to study.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that, at times, the environment forces many a third world institution to include in the list of minimum things that would be considered unnecessary for a theological institution to provide or a luxury if they were. Such is the case when a struggling school in an impoverished country is forced to maintain its own power plant because the country is unable to provide a reliable electricity supply, or when already cash strapped institutions must find considerable sums for security services because government is unable to provide this for its citizens.

### III. The Feasibility of Theological Education in the Face of Socio-economic Deprivation

One could be tempted to argue that in light of the poverty of the South and the opulence of the North, the latter should assume responsibility for the theological education of the former. As I will argue toward the end of this essay, the North does have a valuable contribution to make to this undertaking. However, the position adopted here is that despite the socio-economic disadvantages of the South, the responsibility for the theological education in the southern hemisphere rests primarily with the southern Christian community. I am convinced that this responsibility can be discharged if the venture is fully backed by the southern church, strategically supported by the global church, and is conducted in a manner that is responsive to the realities of the southern context. The balance of this essay will be devoted to the unpacking of this claim.

#### A. The Supportive Ownership of the Southern Church

In the early days of theological education in the developing world, the ownership of the enterprise rested in the main with the northern church. Many theological institutions in the South were established at northern initiatives, supported with northern funds, and staffed by northern personnel. They were by and large denominational institutions with close ties with the foreign missions of which the local denominations were basically extensions.

With the passing of time, the situation changed. As local church bodies matured and weaned themselves from their overseas 'mothers', they gradually assumed responsibility for the ministries and institutions which were formerly under missionary leadership. But while this assumption of ownership has been considerably successful in the case of such ministries as the pastorate, evangelism and church planting, it tended to lag behind in the case of theological education. In many instances, even after the handing over of the reins of governance to national leadership, many theological institutions not only continue to depend heavily on foreign aid for their survival, but they are sometimes required to support financially the local denominations to which they belong! A study produced by the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the financial viability of theological education in the Third World found that some 70% of the operational budget of theological institutions from various parts of the majority world came directly or indirectly from overseas resources and that 'most of the build-

ings have been built with foreign funds'.<sup>18</sup> When the foreign support stops, many of these institutions simply cease to operate.

My contention here is that if the quest for the viability for theological education in the South is to stand even a remote chance of succeeding, ownership must embrace not just the assertion of the rights of rulership but also the responsibility for the provision of meaningful material backing by the local church. Such an understanding must feature as an essential plank of the whole undertaking. Real support by the local church which theological education serves is an essential nutrient for its eventual growth from the status of a sheltered garden of foreign dependency to that of a fully acclimatized tree with deep roots in the southern soil.<sup>19</sup>

There are two elements essential to the actualization of the principle of supportive ownership. The first is a greater recognition by the church of the significance of theological education for its life and ministry. The church's deep conviction of the necessity of evangelism was the format which stirred the evangelistic zeal which resulted in the phenomenal growth that is being experienced in the South at this time.

There is a need for a commensurate enthusiasm for theological education, which many regard as luxurious, elitist and dispensable—an optional add-on to be undertaken after more urgent

things are attended to. The church needs to be awakened to the truth that when evangelization is not supported by theological education, converts are dwarfed by a milk-fed faith, vulnerable to errors of all sorts and unable to be effective Christian witnesses.

The second element concerns the church's awareness of its stewardship capability and potential. The Scriptures make it clear that unfavourable socio-economic conditions are not necessary impediments to giving. Ancient Israel supplies an instructive example in this regard. While on the road to Canaan, that nomadic people built a splendid sanctuary to Yahweh with their own resources (Ex. 24-40). The 'fundraising' drive that was conducted for that project brought in much more than was actually needed for the work. The biblical author took pain to emphasize that the success was not due to the people's abundant wealth, but to the willingness of their hearts (Ex. 35:20,26,29).

If we turn to the New Testament, we find similar examples. It is indisputable that, in the main, the early Christians were not well-to-do. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 1:26, Paul candidly reminded the Corinthian believers of their low status when they came to Christ. Yet, this reality did not prevent him from challenging them to participate fully in the support of the Lord's work—whether relief for the poor, the missionary campaign or his own support (2 Cor. 8:1-15, Philp. 4:10-20). Nor did the Christians themselves use their plight to claim exemption from responding to the apostle's appeal. Indeed, some of those poor believers stunned Paul by their generous response. Out of the Macedonians'

---

<sup>18</sup> Herbert M. Zorn, *Viability in Context* (London: The Theological Education Fund, 1975), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Zorn, *Viability*, p. ix.

severe trial and extreme poverty came a rich generosity that far exceeded their economic ability (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Southern Christians must be challenged to emulate such commendable examples. This will require consistent teaching of the biblical principles of faithful stewardship and sacrificial giving. One of the main aims of southern theological education therefore must be the removal of whatever residue of a dependency mentality remains in the southern church. This will be achieved by producing leaders who will teach and challenge southern Christians—rich and poor—to participate in the work of God according to their ability.

The demonstration of the kind of sacrificial stewardship highlighted above is by no means confined to biblical times. I have seen inspiring examples of it in the Caribbean where I live and work. Though operating in an economically weak region, some churches and individual Christians have found ways to assume supportive ownership of theological education.

Some churches do it by covering the tuition cost of the students they send to the theological school. Other churches opt to support the ongoing teaching of a subject or subjects in which they have special interest. Hence, in our region, missions-minded congregations such as the Swallowfield Chapel of Kingston, Abundant Life of Barbados, Grace Community Church of Nassau, and Bolosse Baptist Church of Haiti have for years supported a chair in World Missions at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology, making possible the training of Caribbean nationals for cross-cultural ministries and the teaching of missiology. Christ-

ian professionals too support the venture by contributing their expertise in critical service areas, thereby saving the institution large sums of money.

## B. A Context Responsive Model

As is well known, the dependence of southern theological education on the North is not just economic; it is also academic, curricular and methodological. The enterprise has been described as being essentially a mere 'transplant from the West',<sup>20</sup> and a slavish imitation of what is used elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> Kosuke Koyama, the Japanese theologian and theological educator, has underscored that dependence by highlighting the global domination of the northern theological model. Koyama writes:

Whether students are in Madras or Lima, the theological diplomas they receive are standardized by the level of Western Theological Education. The basic model of accreditation of theological schools throughout the world comes from accreditation standards originally written for Western Schools. Thus globally, all theological education belongs to the Western-centred prestige system. The structure of curriculum and method are basically identical with the Western structure... wherever theologically schools are located, their curriculum is divided, more or less, into the four basic fields. Any change to

<sup>20</sup> Zorn, *Viability*, p. ix.

<sup>21</sup> Emilio Nunez, 'El Problema Del Curriculo' in *Nuevas Alternativas De Educacion Teologica* C. Rene Padilla, ed. (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creacion, 1985), p. 61.

this system would threaten the approved global system of theological education.<sup>22</sup>

Various reasons have been advanced for the pervasive dominance of the northern model. Attention has been drawn to the theological poverty of the South, the scarcity of instructional materials in the southern context, and the fact that the majority of those currently engaged in southern theological education have been trained in the North. Doubtless, these are important factors that must be given due consideration in any serious examination of theological education in the majority world.

But, however pertinent they may be, these considerations do not obviate the fact that the virtually wholesale appropriation by the South of a model that was designed for a context so vastly different from itself poses a suitability problem that cries out for attention. As Jim Stamoilis puts it, to be effective 'training must always be appropriate to the local context'.<sup>23</sup>

But what model of theological education would best suit the southern context? I will offer some pointers in the balance of this section, but before doing so, two caveats are necessary. Firstly, although sharing similar socio-economic challenges, the South is a remarkably heterogeneous region. Hence, the need may not be for one

generic model designed to fit it all, but for a multiplicity of 'custom-made' models for the various sub-contexts which together make up the overall southern milieu. Secondly, the call for a contextualized approach must not be interpreted as a campaign for the wholesale abandonment of the legacy bequeathed by the North. Koyama, whom we earlier feature as lamenting the pervasiveness of the northern influence eschews any call for its outright elimination on the ground that such a move would be simplistic, impractical and even undesirable.<sup>24</sup>

What is needed is a critical appropriation of the legacy, involving the endorsement of its useful features, the adaptation of others, the correction of those deemed faulty and the creation of new ones as may be required by the peculiarities of each environment. With this in mind, speaking from the standpoint of the Caribbean region, I am putting forth the suggestion that a context responsive paradigm of theological education would need to exhibit the following four characteristics.

### 1. Church-centred

If theological education is to have the people of God as its principal beneficiaries, then one of its primary marks must be church-centredness. Jim Stamoilis puts it bluntly: 'If any curriculum is being taught that does not facilitate the ministry of the local congregation; it does not matter how orthodox or how classical the teaching it is not appropriate theological education.'<sup>25</sup> This is strong language, but it is

---

22 Kosuke Koyama, 'Theological Education: Its Unities and Diversities', *Unpublished Paper*, p. 10.

23 James Stamoilis 'Theological Education in the 21st Century: Emerging Critical Issues', *Unpublished paper delivered at the ICETE Conference, Moorlands College, April 1996*, p. 3.

---

24 Koyama, *Theological Education*, p. 6.

25 Stamoilis, *Theological Education*, p. 3.

right on target. Theological education lives up to its identity if it demonstrably a servant of the church. But to serve the church effectively it must be in a position to feel the church's pulses and hear its heartbeat. It is only by being so closely connected to the church that theological education is able to determine the church's educational need: what should be taught, how it should be taught, and the level at which it needs to be taught. Such knowledge yields at least two great dividends.

The first is the matching of resources with needs, resulting in greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and the second, the development of context sensitive curricula and methodologies resulting in greater contextual relevance.

In an informative collection of essays dealing with the history of theological education in North America, the editors candidly highlight the uneasiness of the North American evangelical community with formal theological education as one of the issues which bedevils the enterprise.<sup>26</sup> Amongst the reasons advanced for the community's discomfort is its ambivalence about the usefulness of formal theological learning for what it considers paramount for the life and ministry of the church.<sup>27</sup> Needless to say the community's disenchantment has cost theological institutions some much

needed support, as some of the disaffected churches went on to establish their own theological schools. There is here an important lesson that the southern theological education community should not miss.

## 2. Cooperative

The next feature of our proposed content-sensitive model is co-operation. The dispensing of theological education in an economically disadvantaged region necessitates conscious cooperation among those who feel called to serve the church in this fashion. This is particularly critical when the training required is formal and advanced. The infrastructural requirements are so demanding that few institutions can do it alone. Even in the economically well off North the task is proving to be daunting for some schools. The high cost of operation translates into higher tuition fees which reduces the affordability of the education and results in the eventual downfall of many an institution. In our economically disadvantaged two-thirds worlds context creative ways must be found to extract maximum results through the efficient use of scarce resources. The avoidance of costly duplications must be a dominant feature of our *modus operandi*.

In some cases this may mean the merging of weak institutions into one strong and viable entity. Such cooperation not only enhances cost effectiveness and promotes quality, it also boosts Christian witness. Clearly, it is much easier for society to ignore a multitude of struggling theological schools.

One is, of course, aware that the concern for the maintenance of theo-

---

26 D. Hart and Albert Mohler, eds, *A Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 7.

27 Hart and Mohler, *Theological Education*, pp 17-19.



logical distinctions is a major challenge to collaborative efforts amongst evangelicals. Indeed, in the volume referred to above, the editors appeal to just such a sensitivity to provide a rationale for the continued existence of a plethora of theological institutions, sometime operating in close proximity to one another.<sup>28</sup>

But without in any way wanting to downplay such concern, it must be stressed that in the South, given our limited resources, we must learn to work together, despite our differences. As people firmly committed to the basic tenets of evangelical faith, we should be able to find creative ways to preserve our distinctives while cooperating closely to offer the southern church the best theological education possible.

### 3. Bivocational

Bivocationality is the third tenet of the approach being proposed. My argument is simple. In contexts where the church is able to fully absorb a theologically trained workforce and provide full support for its workers a case can be made for a purist approach to theological education. But in areas where such ability is lacking, clearly an eclectic approach is the preferred option. Here, instead of confining training for the ministry to the study of theological disciplines alone, theological education should purposefully bring under its purview the study of non-theological disciplines which bear relevance to the wider society as well as the prac-

tice of ministry within the church. In so doing, theological education prepares persons to participate meaningfully in both domains, thereby playing the role of bridge between them. The versatility and currency of the education that results from this approach is further enhanced if, in addition to its diversified content, it enjoys formal recognition from the local educational system.

At the Jamaica Theological Seminary, this feature has been introduced to good effect. Since its introduction, the institution has experienced considerable growth, having attracted to the study of theology persons who probably would otherwise have made different choices. The varied content of the school's academic offerings and its accredited status made it possible for many students to come to the institution with the full financial backing of their employers, including secular government. In some cases students have been able to access loans from both the public and private sector.

It goes without saying that the increase in enrolment which resulted from this approach has contributed significantly to the financial viability of the school. Furthermore, the fact that the education prepares graduates for gainful employment in the secular realm has facilitated the retention of the majority for service in the church. Perhaps, the greater benefit of this two-pronged approach to theological education is the opportunity it provides for the broadening of the concept of ministry to embrace both the strengthening of the church through pastoral work and other activities, and witness to the world through sustained engagement with it and an ongoing presence in the secular marketplace. The impact

---

<sup>28</sup> Hart and Mohler, *Theological Education*, pp. 25, 26.

of the graduates' witness in that latter domain has not escaped the attention of the society, including the political directorate.

#### 4. Transformational

A great deal of what has been said so far can, with good reason, be characterized as coping mechanism—a gymnastic-like attempt to circumvent the socio-economic potholes of the southern landscape in order to keep theological education afloat. But we need to go further because what is really needed is the altering of the hostile environment into a milieu which is theological education friendly. Theological education itself has a significant contribution to make to this transformation project.

But how can theological education exert a transforming influence on the context in which it operates? To a large extent, the answer to this query lies in its effort to overcome the dichotomies it has inherited, and in so doing, assume a more integrative character.

We have already hinted at the transforming benefits which can be reaped when allowance is made for theological graduates to straddle both church and world. Doubtless, there would be an even greater impact if this were to become policy across the theological education world. Sociologist Lawrence Mamiya is certain about this. Speaking from the perspective of the African-American community, Mamiya argues that if the black clergy were knowledgeable in the area of public policy they would be in a position to influence government to adopt 'policy options that would lead to the empowerment of their people or bring healing to bruised and broken lives'. This conviction led

him to recommend strongly the inclusion of training in policy analysis in the curriculum of seminaries in general, and particularly those which train ministers for work in urban and poverty stricken areas.<sup>29</sup>

But even more powerful context-altering energy would be released if theological education were able to overcome the physical spiritual compartmentalization bequeathed to modern culture by the enlightenment zeitgeist and inculcate in those it trains the necessity for holistic ministry. As an entity called to minister to people who are by nature multi-dimensional, the church must discard modernity's anthropologically misguided bifurcation and discharge a multi-dimensional ministry.

But history has shown that the church best fulfils this calling when it is led by persons whose portfolio includes *both* the ability to provide sound spiritual leadership *and* the capacity to stir people 'from their fatalistic attitudes to take actions [designed] to alter their conditions'.<sup>30</sup> Hence, in socio-economically chal-

---

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Mamiya, 'A Black Church Challenge to and Perspective in Christianity and Civil Society' in Rodney Petersen, ed., *Christianity and Civil Society* (Orbis Books: Mary Knoll, NY), p 57.

<sup>30</sup> Mamiya, 'A Black Church Challenge to and Perspective in Christianity', p. 53—The Ministry of Voice of Calvary in Hendenhall and Jackson Mississippi spearheaded by the Black American Clergyman John Perkins, is a powerful example of the transforming impact of holistic ministry. See John Perkins, *With Justice For All* (Ventura, Ca: Regal Books, 1982), particularly, Chapter 13.

lenged environments, skills in community mobilization, community organization, community development, and the ability to speak prophetically to the context with a view to steering in the direction of God's ideal for societal life, are essential ministry assets that theological education should diligently seek to develop and hone.

### C. Strategic Collaboration with the Northern Church

So far I've argued for the feasibility of theological education in the South solely on the ground that it is supportively owned by the southern church and dispensed in a manner which takes into account the peculiarities of the southern context. But this is not to suggest that the northern church has no role to play in the theological education of the South. This would neither be realistic nor desirable. Rather, our point is that the northern input, though welcome, should be supportive not determinative. What is needed is a kind of strategic collaboration that assists in the delivery of theological education in a manner that promotes the eventual self sufficiency of southern institutions.

It is a biblical principle for those who have to share with those in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-15). While the deprivation of the South challenges southern Christians to exercise faith and practise sacrificial giving, it provides an opportunity for northern Christians to practise Christian sympathy and demonstrate active love toward God's global church.

The collaborative and supportive input advocated here can take place in many strategic areas. I will touch on three: academic personnel, literary

production, and financial assistance for students.

First, in many areas of the two-thirds world where advanced theological education is deemed necessary for the vitality of the church, there is a need for qualified personnel. In many theological disciplines, and theologically related fields, the southern church has yet to produce people with the requisite knowledge, expertise and credentials. Here the northern church can play a critically important role. It can contribute personnel who are academically qualified, culturally sensitive and willing to work shoulder to shoulder with and under the leadership of southern nationals. Such assistance need not result in a reversion to the dependency relationship bemoaned above if it is short-lived, and if steps are taken to develop nationals to take on the baton, when the foreign help ceases.

The dependency syndrome can be further reduced if the institution which is being aided is able to participate in the remuneration of the foreign personnel. Alternatively, the northern church can assist with the training of prospective southern scholars who are committed to the southern church. When qualified and committed southern scholars are found, it can also assist in retaining them for the region.

Second, assistance with the production of theological material in the South is another way the northern church can lend strategic support to the southern theological enterprise. This need is particularly acute in the French speaking parts of the two thirds world. The pressure of multiple tasks makes it very difficult for theological scholars in the developing world to

research and write. Even where these difficulties are overcome, finding publication opportunities is another problem. Facilitating literary output from the South is one of the best ways the North can contribute to the maturity of the southern church.

As helpful as materials produced in other contexts can be, they cannot adequately satisfy the need for home-grown reflection. Each context has a unique set of questions, concerns, and needs that the faith must address if it is to speak pertinently to that context. Just as reflection emanating from the North has been a blessing to the South, the reverse will prove true if the North is exposed to the thoughts and experiences of southern Christians.

A third way to collaborate strategically with the southern institutions in the dispensing of theological education is through the provision of scholarships for needy students. A common problem in many two thirds world institutions is high level of debt incurred by students unable to honour their financial obligations. When students can't pay, schools are deprived of the revenue they badly need to keep afloat. It follows that when students receive financial assistance it is not they alone who breathe a sigh of relief, but the institution as well. But the strategic character of such support is not exhausted by the dual result that it produces. It is also seen in the dividends that it yields to the contributor.

Clearly, for persons desirous to contribute to the health of the southern church, there is no greater opportunity than to participate in the training of its leaders in their own context. Such an involvement produces outcomes which are hard to beat: it is cost effective,

facilitates a context sensitive training, and guarantees a higher rate of leadership retention for the southern church.

## Conclusion

The ideas expressed in the preceding pages are not novel. There are signs (albeit faint) that the theological education enterprise is moving in the overall direction highlighted in this essay. In parts of the developing world, there are examples of the southern church assuming supportive ownership of theological education on a greater scale than before. Thomas Kuhn did warn us that paradigms don't change easily. Yet, one must be encouraged by the fact that a concept such as contextualization which gained ascendancy primarily because of its significance for missions and theology, is now being discussed in connection with theological education. This is a signal of openness for another look at the inherited paradigm.

Also, there are indications of the northern church's willingness to come alongside the southern church to assist with needs that the latter deems critical. Northern organizations such as the Overseas Council International, the Langham Partnerships, World Partners, the Mennonite Central Committee, Tear Fund and others have understood the importance of this new model of North-South relationship for theological education.

In light of this, in both regions, what is needed is not a re-invention of the wheel, but a speedier actualization of the new thinking. There is no more opportune moment to do so than now, when loud calls are being made for the renewal of theological education.

## Books Reviewed

Reviewed by David Parker

Donald G. Bloesch

*The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment and Glory*

Reviewed by Robert K. Langat

Simon Chan

*Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of The Christian Life* by

## Book Reviews

ERT (2005) 29:3, 284-286

**The Last Things: Resurrection,  
Judgment and Glory**

Christian Foundations No 7

by Donald G. Bloesch

Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004

ISBN 0-8308-1417-5

Hb 336pp Indexes Bibliog

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,  
Evangelical Review of Theology*

In this the final volume of his seven part 'Christian Foundations' series, Donald Bloesch (Emeritus Professor of Theology, Dubuque Theological Seminary) emphasizes strongly the distinctive evangelical theology of Word and Spirit that has characterized the project throughout. He ends up with an 'Afterword' on the topic, and also a full bibliography of his extensive writings and works about them.

Biblical authority interpreted according to a non-rationalist (or fundamentalist) manner, and copious references to the subordinate authority of 'sacred tradition', are prominent features as he tackles conventional topics in the area of eschatology—millennium, death, resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell, the intermediate and final states. His conclusions (such as a re-emphasis on 'hades' and paradise)

emphasize the victory and lordship of Christ, the cruciality of the cross, and the final sovereignty of God.

But even so, he is not satisfied with standard answers which appear to him to be imbalanced or without adequate support. For example, avoiding both futurism and preterism, and trying to bring 'a semblance of unity to evangelical churches' which are so divided on this matter, he opts for a 'transmillennialism'.

Arguing that 'one glaring weakness' of premillennialism is 'its lack of firm biblical basis' and rejecting an over-literalizing hermeneutic, he proposes a 'realizing or unfolding millennium'. This holds that the kingdom of Christ belongs to 'both history and superhistory' and is in the process of being revealed—'its inauguration has already occurred at his first coming'. He explains, 'Now we have the millennium in its preliminary phase; then we shall see it in its manifest or consummate stage.' The millennium is therefore 'a fluid symbol' of the 'earth in a stage of transition from history to eternity... of the world in the process of being transfigured by the glory of God' (pp. 109-111).

But even more than this, Bloesch's theological principles lead him to explore unusual, and as he puts it in the Preface,

'controversial positions',—but ones, nevertheless, that always, he argues, 'stand in continuity with the biblical message'. One such example, which is treated in different places throughout the book, is the impact of the 'triumph of grace' and the fact that in the biblical witness to God, there is no ultimate dualism. When applied to teaching about judgement and the final state of unbelievers, this means that there can be no simplistic view of hell as an eternal state completely outside the rule of God. Not wanting to abandon the notion of hell for sentimental or other reasons, Bloesch affirms that 'The reality of hell must be taken seriously but this is not a hell outside the compass of the love of God.... we must affirm no ultimate dualism but instead a duality within an ultimate unity. There is no coeternal evil...'

With passages such as Psalm 139:8 and Philippians 2:11 in mind, he argues that we must 'see that God's judgment is not opposed to his glory; his glory is indeed revealed in his judgment. The glory of God already fills all things, but it will be revealed as all-encompassing when Christ comes again to judge and redeem the world.' From the point of view of the unbeliever, hell is seen as 'the horror of eternal separation from God' but 'the pain in hell is due to the presence of God rather than to his absence, to his unfathomable love rather than to any abysmal hatred, or what is worse, gross indifference' (pp. 217-8).

As Bloesch attempts to bring all of the biblical parameters to bear on difficult topics, he presents a position which is typically positive and hopeful, and full of grace, and which contrasts strongly with pessimistic, vengeful or apocalyptic eschatologies which are often encountered. He may not carry all his readers with him in these views, but none would

deny that it is necessary to push questions like this to the limits of their logic, sources, norms and especially their gospel dynamic. The caveats and examples mentioned by Bloesch adequately identify the zones of danger, thus allowing his reflections to open up possibilities that are worthy of serious consideration.

In line with this approach, the author is not restricted to the traditional topics but is anxious to give guidance on many important matters which are often omitted. This large twelve chapter book allows space to include many of these. One of the 'abysmally neglected' topics which he addresses is 'the communion of saints', (including prayers and the dead) in which, incidentally, he draws upon Christian hymns for insights: 'evangelical Protestants have been almost mute... in their excursions in systematic theology, [but] their hymnody present a somewhat different picture.' Another important topic is 'Israel's Salvation' which includes the author's support for missions to the Jews, although, regrettably for the current context, it does not move into socio-political implications of evangelical teaching in this area. Other less frequently addressed topics covered include the spiritual world of angels and evil powers, and the Day of the Lord.

One chapter that does not seem so appropriate, at least at first sight, is 'Predestined to Glory', in which the traditional doctrine of election is addressed, without much integration with eschatology. However, it gives the author the opportunity (especially in an appendix to the chapter) to reiterate his theology of paradox, which for him is 'not a logical riddle nor a verbal puzzle but the inbreaking of a new reality into human thought and experience'. This means, of course, that 'We should not glory in paradox but rejoice in the reality that comes to us in

the form of paradox' (p. 186).

The opening chapter discussing the church in relation to culture, history and the kingdom of God is also unusual—although it is an appropriate bridge from the previous volume in this series. But it is far more than an exercise in systematic integration—it reflects an important aspect of the entire focus of the series and of the author's theology—as he states clearly in the 'Afterword'—'My purpose in offering these volumes is not simply to refine theology's reflection on the Word of God but to pave the way for the reform of the church in the light of the Word of God.'

The final chapter carries this aim through to 'The Dawning of Hope'. Here the author rounds out his vision by extolling a worldview and spirituality focused on the supremacy of Christ and the consummation of kingdom for all creation, in contrast with false and unsatisfying positions such as fatalism, cynicism and determinism. He concludes,

We can face the future with hope because we have already been given a foretaste of future glory in the power of the Spirit.... We can embark on a pilgrimage of faith because we are energised by the Spirit, who liberates our will for obedience in the name of Christ. We can give ourselves to the service of the kingdom in the power of love because the Spirit rekindles within us the hope of the everlasting. (p. 260)

This hermeneutic of discipleship embodying well founded scholarship in the service of the gospel is the sign of good theology.

ERT (2005) 29:3, 286-288

## Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of The Christian Life

Simon Chan

Downers Grove, InterVarsity: 1998

ISBN 0830815422

Pb pp350 Indexes

*Reviewed by Robert K. Langat, Kenya Highlands Bible College, Kenya. (edited by Stephen Chang, Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology, Seoul Korea)*

Within evangelical churches we are familiar with the term 'spirituality', for we often hear Christians and pastors talk about growing spiritually. Yet this term is regularly used without definition. Simon Chan has described and given various definitions of spirituality in relation to different theological positions. In the first part of his book, he describes the theological principles of spirituality while in the second part, he describes how spirituality is practised or lived out by the advocates of those spiritual theologies. In particular, he mentions prayer as a practice in connection with doctrines of the church.

Although the term 'spirituality' is so frequently used, it is understood differently amongst Christian people and churches. For example, it has been used by various groups to describe socio-cultural movements and the interest of the groups using it. The reason why the term is selected to describe their social activities is that it is perceived by many as a respectable word. For others, spirituality would be understood as commitment. But for the Christian, the term is understood in terms of the personal relationship with God.

Before the Enlightenment or the age of reason, theology had no divisions such as dogmatic, spiritual, biblical and so on. Theology itself was considered a spiritual

exercise. So spiritual theology is defined as that part of theology which comes from the truth of divine revelation and the religious experience of an individual person; spirituality directs the growth and development of the person's life with God from beginning to end.

Chan concentrates on this branch of theology. He points out that the knowledge of God's nature and person determines the character of Christian spirituality. If a Christian perceives God as an authoritarian 'policeman', he/she will abide by the rules. Therefore there are various spiritualities based on various understandings of God which are expressed differently by individual Christians. Then, those different spiritual theologies affect the understanding of Christian life and the resultant behaviour.

Chan points out that different types of spirituality appeal to Christians of different temperaments. Accordingly to Chan, Anglo people prefer a Cistercian and Augustinian monastic spirituality over the more austere Carmelite and Carthusian versions. However, we might question whether that is as universally true as he implies. He concedes that a melancholic personality prefers a more contemplative type of spirituality. However, it does seem that various temperaments are attracted to different types of spiritual theologies. Hence he argues that there is no single type of spirituality which satisfies everyone. He views diverse Christian spiritualities as gifts to the church, and sees different gifts described by Paul as fitting different personalities. Thus, the exercise of gifts such as leadership, hospitality and teaching applies to different personality types.

The idea of being conformed to the image of Christ does not mean that all Christians will be alike, but that Christ-likeness has to do with the development

of virtues which occur in an individual personality. Conformity to Christ does not mean one has to be like a Mzungu (European) or Muhindi (Indian) or African or an Arab—each Christian has to live out their spirituality according to their individual make-up, nature and gifts. The sanguine may have no less love than a melancholy, but each one expresses the virtue differently. This is a very significant understanding of the concept of Christ-likeness which every Christian ought to appreciate. Chan thinks these spiritualities, though expressed differently, do complement each other, and help highlight and preserve aspects of the totality of Christian life and belief that would be otherwise lost. Recognizing the existence of different spiritualities is not to say one is better than the other.

Chan outlines the criteria for determining the adequacy of different spiritualities as comprehensiveness, coherence and evocable. What is central to spirituality according to Chan is what an individual perceives as the reality. In other words, the knowledge of reality determines the spirituality in one's life. Chan thinks that a theology which is faithful to God's revelation is essential to the development of adequate Christian spirituality. One way of doing this is by exploring the different parts of God's nature in the scriptures. He gives examples of the parts as God of suffering, justice and so on. The Trinity distinguishes the Christian concept of deity from other monotheistic concepts.

According to Chan, sin and human nature must be understood in terms of relationality because human acts are not done in isolation. He gives a lengthy discussion on Catholic views of sin—the first of which is ontological rather than relational, in which sin is a kind of pollution rather than an attitude. Secondly, sin is located in the will rather than in the



heart. Chan therefore clearly distinguishes between the Catholic view of conversion and the Protestant view. Catholicism views the heart as a garden overgrown with weeds which need to be uprooted and which needs to be cultivated to create a perfect garden. Protestantism on the other hand views the heart as a wilderness which needs radical transformation before beginning cultivation.

Chan has pointed out why various spiritualities have been developed, based on various understandings of God and humanity. Augustine's understanding of human nature was narrow. He understood man as completely dead, unable to act. The Greek fathers understood man as having the freedom to act. The focus of their prayer was to seek the right way of action.

Chan has expounded the terms justification, sanctification and glorification as understood by various traditions of Christendom in relationship to salvation. He sees salvation as a process of growth of Christian virtues towards closer unification with God. The more a Christian is perfected in love, the greater his/her identity with the church. For him sainthood is perfected in communion with others and not in isolation. Thus the purpose of spiritual formation is to enable one to live responsibly with the community into which one is baptized. The visible church then becomes crucial for understanding spiritual life which is patterned after and sustained by the Trinity. This understanding is least developed within the evangelical churches. He argues that the problem of ecclesiology is serious in the West, and

in Asia, it is catastrophic.

He points out what has become the stumbling block for the church growth movement in Asia and in Africa. The problem is that the evangelical churches, and others produced and patterned after their kind, have perpetuated the deep divisions found in Western Protestantism. I agree with Chan that their continued presence serves as the major stumbling block to Christian witness, not only in Asia but in Africa as well. The more serious defect is found in the nondenominational agencies that produce churches without any sense of history and tradition. The problem in these churches has become even worse because they have become hostage to the 'dependency syndrome'.

Chan describe the nature of the visible church as a family in which all members experience their identity and belonging. Further the church is not called to model itself after the modern societies, but to be counter cultural, posing challenges to society. The sacraments serve as reminders of the eschatological community and the journey of a suffering community. Celebration of the community is embodied in worship which is the central focus of the Christian community.

However, identifying yourself with the Christian community does not mean that one loses one's distinctiveness. He argues instead that individuals must cultivate the life of solitude and feed themselves through the word and prayer, rather than depending on community for spiritual support. Interdependency is needed for spiritual development in the community of believers.

## ABSTRACTS/INDEXING

This journal is abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts, 121 South College Street (P.O. Box 215), Myerstown, PA 17067, USA, and in the Christian Periodical Index, P.O. Box 4, Cedarville, OH 45314, USA.

It is also indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Fl., Chicago, Illinois 60606-5834 USA, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Web: www.atla.com/

## MICROFORM

This journal is available on Microform from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Road, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, USA. Phone: (313)761-4700

## Subscription rates

Period	Institutions			Individuals		
	UK	USA & Canada	Elsewhere Overseas	UK	USA & Canada	Elsewhere Overseas
One Year	£28.80	\$76.00	£30.40	£28.80	\$49.40	£30.40
Two/Three Years, per year	£25.90	\$68.40	£27.40	£25.90	\$44.50	£27.40

**2/3rds world, individuals and institutions:**  
50% discount on the overseas sterling (£) rates listed above.

**All subscriptions to:**  
Paternoster Periodicals, PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS, UK  
Tel: UK 0800 195 7969; Fax: 01228 51 49 49  
Tel Overseas: +44(0) 1228 611723; Fax +44(0) 1228 514949  
Email pp@stl.org  
Web Site: www.paternoster-publishing.com

## Important Note to all Postal Subscribers

When contacting our Subscription Office in Carlisle for any reason **always quote your Subscription Reference Number.** This appears on the address label used to send your copies to you.

## Photocopying Licensing

No part of the material in this journal may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of Paternoster Periodicals, except where a licence is held to make photocopies.

Applications for such licences should be made to the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

It is illegal to take multiple copies of copyright material.

## Mission Possible: Biblical Strategies for Reaching the Lost

Julie C. Ma

Written as Julie Ma hiked the mountains to share God's News, *Mission Possible* is a book for the church which liberates missiology from the specialists for every believer. Nevertheless, it also serves as a textbook that is simple and friendly, and yet solid in biblical interpretation. This book links the biblical teaching to the actual and contemporary missiological setting, and in doing so serves two important purposes. Examples are clearly given which aid understanding, and the biblical development is brought into our contemporary setting, making the Bible come alive.

**Julie C. Ma** teaches intercultural studies at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines, and is editor of the *Journal of Asian Mission*.

ISBN: 1-870345-37-1 / 229x152 / 178pp / £19.99

## Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries

I. Mark Beaumont

This book analyses Christian presentations of Christ for Muslims in the most creative periods of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the first half of the ninth century and the second half of the twentieth century. In these two periods, Christians made serious attempts to present their faith in Christ in terms that take into account Muslim perceptions of him, with a view to bridging the gap between Muslim and Christian convictions.

**I. Mark Beaumont** is Director of Mission Studies at Birmingham Christian College.

ISBN: 1-870345-46-0 / 229x152mm / 350pp / £24.99



PATERNOSTER

9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK