CHURCH-BASED THEOLOGY: CREATING A NEW PARADIGM

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Presented at BILD-International Conference

Ames, Iowa

May 5, 1995

It is absolutely essential, at this point in history, for the church to understand the times in which it is living. Major shifts of a paradigmatic nature are taking place in almost every sphere of life. Business, education and government are all going through major "reengineering". The technological age is rapidly reshaping how we work, learn, train our kids and go about all sorts of service and ministry. New terms dominate the academic conversation, such as post-modern, post-enlightenment and post-critical, all attempting to describe the new era which is dawning upon human history. New age movements, global village concepts and international networks fill our newspapers and airways. Communications systems are redefining our concept of everything from office complexes to libraries to international trade. We are entering a new era. Listen to Peter Drucker, a leading analyst in economics and societal patterns, as he comments on our historical time:

> "Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation. We cross what in an earlier book (*The New Realities*) I call a "divide". Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself - its world mview; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And people born then cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born. We are currently living through just such a transformation."[1]

In some ways we can expect this transformation to be like any other major historical shift of the past, but in other ways it is not like any previous shift because technology is enabling us to do things never before even imagined. This era, with its potential for great confusion and destruction, holds for the church, I believe, almost unparalleled opportunity.

[1] *Post Capitalist Society*, by Peter F. Drucker, (Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 1. This book, along with his previous title *The New Realities* (1989) and the trilogy by Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (1970), *The Third Wave* (1980) and *PowerShift* (1990), all written a decade apart, give a comprehensive picture of the global nature of these changes. The Tofflers have recently released a small 100 page book which summarizes all of their main ideas, entitled *Creating a New Civilization: The Politics of the Third Wave* (Turner Publishing, 1995).

Two theological scholars, Hans Kung and David Bosch, both renowned in their respective fields, have grasped very early on with great breadth of scholarship and insight, some of these basic paradigmatic patterns. In light of the great historical eras of the church, they have begun to identify for the church, the future world which lies before it, and provide some initial identifying markers to help it chart the course in building effective ministry models and doing relevant theology in culture. I believe the most seminal work is that of Hans Kung entitled *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*[2], in which he builds a model of "paradigm changes in the history of theology and the church", which provides much of the genesis for the first section of this paper entitled "Joining the Great Theological Conversation". Though as evangelicals we do not share Kung's ecumenical goals, at least not in the same sense, his clarity of historical and contemporary insight serves as a guide to all in the Christian faith who are attempting to understand the radically changing times in which we live. The second author, David Bosch, a South African, has built upon Kung's model of paradigm shifts in Christian thought (theology), and applied the model to the history of missions in his monumental work, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*[3]. After attempting to build a very extensive biblical theology of mission from the New Testament, he then traces with great depth how our conception of mission shaped our paradigm of theology in each era, and finishes by identifying the unique elements of the emerging post-modern paradigm, and how the church, after first revisiting its roots, can build a relevant mission in these paradigmatic times.

Both Kung and Bosch agree that this "ecumenical paradigm" as they envision it, calls for a whole new way of doing theology, which is why both of them go all the way back to the first century churches and trace the history of theology and mission from then until contemporary times. We are entering a new era (often referred to as post-modern, post-enlightenment, or post-critical) which calls for a "back to the roots" type of analysis. Not since the early church of the 2nd and 3rd century have so many fundamental questions about theology and mission been raised. The great theological conversation, which since the 2nd and 3rd century has been fundamentally a Western conversation, rooted in the academy (philosophy), has begun to lose its hold on the church worldwide, since the focus is shifting to non-Western Two-Thirds World churches. Whole movements of churches have grown up all over the non-Western world, who desperately need a fresh "theological conversation", rooted not in the Western academy tradition, but in the dynamic of New Testament churches, and in a fresh, comprehensive study of biblical theology, freeing them to think and create - to do theology

[2] There are three works which together give a full picture of the model which Kung is building. The two exclusive by Kung are entitled *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* (Doubleday, 1988) in which he develops the whole paradigm of Christian thought, and *Great Christian Thinkers* (Continuum, 1994) in which he furthers his work on the paradigm by tracing theology through the dominant Christian thinker of each paradigm. The final work, edited by Kung and David Tracy, entitled *Paradigm Change in Theology* (Crossroads, 1991), is a series of papers from a symposium of greta theologians interacting with Kung's paradigm model, held at the University of Tubingen in 1989.

[3] *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, by David J. Bosch, (Orbis Books, 1991).

in culture, in ways that would best serve their churches in the post-modern world.

One of the elements of this new paradigm which is emerging globally, is the rediscovery of the local church, which has not been central in a New Testament way since the first couple of generations following the apostles. Nor has the local church been central in the "great theological conversation." Bosch puts it well in his chapter on the elements of an emerging paradigm:

> The church-in-mission is, primarily, the *local* church everywhere in the world. This perspective, as well as the supposition that no local church should stand in a position of authority over another local church, both fundamental to the New Testament (cf Acts 13:1-3 and the Pauline letters), was for all practical purposes ignored during much of Christian history[4].

We stand on the brink of a new era, an era, which if properly understood will allow us to visit the New Testament times and dynamic, in a fresh way. We live in a time of the rediscovery of the simple genius of the local church, the family of God, the pillar and support of the truth. We have an opportunity to serve and dialogue with churches all over the world - with churches throughout the developing world, as they develop a "critical consciousness" doing theology in their culture without losing their New Testament zeal and dynamic; and with Western churches - both renewal churches and house church movements, as they seek to do theology afresh, revisiting the didache of the New Testament, and building paradigms for this new time in history.

This is the third in a series of new paradigms for the post-modern church. The first looked at new paradigms needed in theological education, and the second at new paradigms needed in the missionary enterprise. The crux of the entire argument is that the local church must be central in theological education, missions and the doing of theology in culture. This article assumes the conclusions of the previous articles, and attempts to build a model for local churches around the world to continue their movements, establish their churches more fully, and out of the life of their churches do theology - par excellence - in their cultures. This church-based movement is primarily about churches, local churches, all over the world. It is not about mission agencies - but it does involve mission. It is not about seminaries - but it does involve theology and theological education.

A lot of criticism has come at this stage in this new church-based movement toward those of us who do not want to mix too closely with the theology of the old paradigm, but to approach things in a radically fresh manner. I hope this article will go a long way in explaining the rationale of our radical approach. Our "back to our roots" focus is not out of a desire to retreat, or out of narrow understanding, or out of criticism of our traditions, but out of a firm belief that God is breathing a fresh wind, a new testament wind, upon local churches all over the world; and He expects us to harness all of our resources to help establish, fully establish, churches all over the world.

[4] Bosch, p. 378.

Let us begin by examining the great theological conversation through the eyes of the historical paradigms of church history.

Examining the "Great Theological (Western) Conversation"

It is extremely difficult to see out of our traditions and culture, let alone our historical paradigm. To gain a clear head, it is important to attempt to understand the broad traditions and the intergenerational conversations of churches throughout the centuries, as well as those in our culture. I have attempted to build a model to help this understanding. This model is influenced heavily by Kung and Bosch, as stated above, but is also the result of interactions with the writings of Justo Gonzalez and Jarslov Pelikan[5]. Between these four authors one is exposed to almost every significant original writing and document of the church through the centuries. But above all, it is shaped by the debates of the first two centuries, and a revisiting of the New Testament didache (the apostles doctrine, which Paul summarized as the traditions, the teachings, the commandments, and later to his key men as the deposit of sound doctrine), which for generations has been held hostage by the official church, and the traditions of the academy, rooted in Platonic thought and ideals. The paradigmatic schema is summarized in Figure 1, entitled "Joining the Great Theological Conversation". A word of caution before beginning to make observations from the chart. Any time one attempts to summarize great eras of historical development, one must pay attention to only the broad patterns, not the exceptions. And one runs the risk of being understood as saying things which were not intended to be implied. But this cannot be avoided, and it is worth the risk of significant misunderstanding. The following observations and implications will be best understood by frequent reference to figure 1. Let's begin with a few observations to get a feel for the diagram.

Basic Observations:

The first observation is that the main theological conversation of the church through the centuries has been fundamentally a Western conversation rooted in the academy. This marriage of theology with the Greek academy and its philosophical thought grew out of an attempt of some early church apologists to defend the apostles' doctrine, and Christianity against the charges that is a religion for the "ignorant". They attempted to demonstrate that Christianity was consistent with the best core principles of the Greek academy "wisdom" tradition. (See Gonzalez's discussions on the Alexandrine tradition.) While it is true that some principles are similar, as one would expect with any good philosophy, this tradition was passed over by Jesus and His apostles. In fact it was the very thing that Paul warned against in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5. Ever since that time, the main apology for the church came out of the academy tradition in one form or another. It

[5] Justo Gonzalez has written a monumental 3-volume work entitled *A History of Christian Thought* (Abingdon, 1972), which spans this whole conversation chart, and a second work entitled *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology* (Abingdon, 1989), in which he reflects on and draws insights from his three volume history of Christian thought for guiding the church in this new paradigm which we are entering. Also note his 2-volume church history entitled *The Story of Christianity* (Harper Collins, 1985). Also important is Jarslov Pelikan's 5-volume set *The Christian Tradition* (Oxford, 1989), an unparalleled piece of research on historical theology, and an unmatched bibliography.

has dominated throughout the centuries. In one sense, the collective consciousness of local churches, and its key gifted leaders, was displaced by the validating influence of those from the tradition of the academy. Only now are we poised to rediscover the local church and revisit the apostolic doctrine in a fresh way - as the dominant movement of Christianity begins centering in the non-Western world.

A second observation, building on the first, is again influenced by Gonzalez. As the church attempted to defend itself against attacks on the apostles' doctrine, some early church fathers resorted to a somewhat Roman law method. It stated that the church owns the teaching, and it does not need to defend it, only interpret it. So, what began as a desire to defend the teaching eventually lead to an authoritative church - the Roman church, and fathered Latin, or Western theology. Again, very innocently, the churches, which began defending the apostles' doctrine through a collective consensus of the early churches was soon replaced by an "official" consensus of the "official" church at Rome, the remnants of which still dominate the theological conversation in much of Christendom today.

A third observation, again built upon Gonzalez's insightful analysis, is that there was an earlier tradition, one exemplified by Irenaeus, and the area of Asia Minor and Syria, with its roots in Antioch, in which the defense of the apostolic doctrine was rooted in the life of the local churches, and pastoral in motivation. The concern was establishing the churches in the didache. This tradition, or type of theology, was eclipsed by the academy and official traditions in the battles of the early churches, and even though we have seen it emerge in small movements throughout church history, it has never played a major role in the great theological conversation. It is the tradition which needs to be revisited today if theology is ever to be church-based again, as was the case in the New Testament churches in the apostles' time, and immediately following. It goes a long way in explaining Bosch's observation - that the central role of the local church has been forgotten for most of church history. We must return to truly local church-based theology, as was the tradition of the early church, if we are to fully establish churches in the apostolic traditions in this ever changing, post-modern world.

The First Principles Through the Centuries

Figure 1

Preserving the Apostles' Doctrine Through the Centuries →

	90's	early 4th cent.	15th/16th cent.	17th century	mid 20th cent.	
New Testament Church	The Early Church	The Catholic Church	The Reformed Church	The Enlightened Church	Post-Modern Church	
The Apostles' Doctrine	Councils, Creeds & Didaches	Papal Authority, Canon Law & Sacramental System	Councils, Confessions & Catechisms	Seminaries & Enlightened Theologians	Seminaries & Post-Enlightenment Theologians	

Posture Towards the First Principles:

First Principles --- Defense -------- Authority -------- Renewal --------- Criticism--------- Universal

Dominant Carriers of the Conversation:

Apostles ------- Church Fathers --- Papal Theologians ------ Reformers ------ Critical Theologians---- Ecumenical Theologians

Kung's Paradigms of Theology
(See also Bosch's Theology of Mission Paradigms – built upon Kung)

1st/2nd cent.	11th century	16th century	17th/18th century	20th century
Primitive Christian Apocalyptic Paradigm (Paul)	Ancient Church Hellenistic Paradigm (Origen, Augustine)	Medieval Roman-Catholic Paradigm (Aquinas)	Reformation Protestant Paradigm (Luther, Calvin)	Modern Enlightenment Paradigm (Schleiermacher)
			Counter-Reformation Roman Catholic Paradigm	
Orthodox Traditionalism		Protestant Traditionalism	Roman Catholic Traditionalism	Liberal Traditionalism

Contemporary:
Ecumenical Paradigm
Dialectic Theology
Existential theology
Hermeneutical theology
Political theology
Liberation theology
- feminist, black theology, Third World theology

(Barth)

Cultural Context of the Great Theological Conversation
(See the Great Books of the Western World collection – 54 volumes edited by Mortimer Adler. The set is built around the first book entitled The Great Conversation and visualizes the conversation three ways – authors on a time line, authors building upon authors, and 102 great ideas, with over 3,000 subordinate ideas – well developed in a two volume Syntopican – enabling the conversation to be entered at any point.

It seems timely, at this point in this treatise, to address several implications of our observations so far.

1. *We need lateral thinking, not neoclassical thinking*. Edward de Bono has developed a very useful concept in his book *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step By Step*[6] which he calls lateral thinking. He argues that there are two kinds of thinking: lateral and vertical. The main idea is that most of our thinking is vertical thinking - logical thinking, which continues one train of thought and builds on it, often selective, following traditional pathways and most likely directions. Lateral thinking moves laterally. It proposes whole new starting points, is generative, fresh and often provocative. Today the church needs to think laterally. Because of the shallowness of contemporary evangelicalism, many are taking us back to the reformed church and its depth of theological thought, which is helpful at one level, but at another level, often very naive, and at times clearly ethnocentric. The church needs to move laterally, radically reexamining the apostolic doctrine and building fresh theological categories and ministry paradigms.

2. *We need to revisit the first principles (apostolic teaching) in a very serious and disciplined manner.* By talking of building a new, fresh paradigm for doing theology, we are not talking about beginning with ourselves, or with the assumptions of our contemporary cultural paradigm, but beginning afresh, without our traditions of Western thought carrying the direction of the conversation, with a careful revisiting of the New Testament teachings—the first principles. This will be developed in the next section.

3. *We need to view the great Western theological conversation as a mixed blessing*. On one hand, it is very useful to be informed on the theological discussions through the centuries, to see the battles fought in different cultures, in different times, and in different settings. On the other hand, because the church is entrenched in the academy and the official church, it often blocks each new generation from its own fresh revisiting of Christianity's radical, dynamic foundations.

4. *We need to rediscover the local church and its central role in preserving the apostolic doctrine*. It is a very significant comment by Bosch that the centrality of the local church has been forgotten throughout most of church history. What started out as a dynamic movement and multiplication of churches building and living out a collective consensus of the apostolic doctrine in culture was soon replaced by the traditions of the academy and the official church. This includes the doing of theology and the faithful passing on of the deposit in the living context of establishing and multiplying churches.

5. *We need to do theology in culture, afresh in each generation*. Every church needs to be an informed church historically and culturally, in that sense to develop a critical consciousness. Yet, each must enjoy the freshness and simplicity of God's design of becoming a dynamic, living, local community - a community of households, capable of

[6] *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, by Edward de Bono (Harper & Row, 1970)

impacting any culture at any time in history. That will be the focus of the last section of this paper.

6. *We need to build new paradigms for the post-modern church - paradigms of education, of mission and of theology*. We must carefully evaluate the deep structures of our historical traditions - paradigms of ministry and all - and hold them up against the light of the teachings of the apostles themselves. If the implications of figure 1 are true, then our new paradigms, if they are to return to our roots in a meaningful way, must in some ways be discontinuous with the paradigms of Western traditions. We must return to our apostolic roots.

Revisiting the Apostolic Tradition

There is not time in this paper to revisit the apostolic doctrine in the serious and disciplined manner suggested in the implications above, but the following will serve as a brief summary and guide to such a disciplined process. Such a revisit would require careful firsthand investigative work into the New Testament: Acts, especially the Pauline letters, and the remaining witness of the apostles in the general letters, all against the backdrop of the gospels. Since time does not allow for such a search, we will set forth at this time a skeletal overview of the process.

Two steps are involved in the process of attempting to revisit the apostolic tradition with the view of recovering it as a guiding foundation for doing theology in contemporary culture. The first is an examination of the New Testament church itself, and as accurately as possible, attempting to recover the apostolic witness to the churches in its purest form. The second is to examine the early church - that early generation of churches which immediately followed the apostles.

The New Testament Church:

Very early on there was an understanding in the New Testament churches that they needed to be "devoted to the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Paul understood his letters to be part of that process of delivering this body of teaching, and that all churches were to become established in it and any who would not follow this teaching was considered unruly, and eventually to be disassociated with if they would not get in line with the teaching - the didache (1 Thess. 4:2; 5:14; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). Paul also referred to this body of teaching as the "elementary teaching" literally the first principles (Colossians 2:6-8, cf. Heb. 5:11-14). In his later letters to his key men Timothy and Titus, he referred to this body of teaching as the deposit of sound doctrine, which was to be guarded vigorously and faithfully (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13,14; 2:2; Titus 1:9,13; 2:1,2). The writers of the general epistles then began the ageless task of "earnestly contending faith once delivered" (Jude 3) which continues up until today.

One point needs to be made briefly at this time. This teaching included more than just a few core doctrines for salvation. It included such teaching as how local churches ought to conduct their community life (1 Tim. 3:14-16; Titus 2) and how individual households - families - ought to conduct their family life (household texts such as Ephesians 5:22-6:9). For a more

comprehensive guide to revisiting the apostles' tradition, see "Appendix I: Traditions, Patterns and Sound Doctrine in the Early Church", taken from the first project guide in the BILD Leadership Series I course entitled "Essentials of Sound Doctrine"[7].

The Early Church:

The early church[8] continued the tradition of attempting to preserve the apostles' doctrine and establish the churches in it, under a constant barrage of attack both from within and without the churches. In a very mysterious, supernatural fashion, the early churches - under all sorts of opposition and attempts to distort the apostles' doctrine - managed to gain a collective consensus among the churches of the "whole of the apostles' doctrine" (true, original meaning of one catholic church). This consensus emerged by a gradual recognition of the body of writings which were recognized as containing the apostles' doctrine (and became the New Testament), by early creedal attempts (i.e. the Apostles' Creed); by church manuals, such as the Didache and the Apostolic Constitutions, designed to help new believers and churches become established in the apostolic traditions; and by a collective apostolic succession of the most prominent church leaders. This collective consensus of key church leaders later led down the path to an official church and an official apostolic succession. In the beginning it was only intended to be the identification of key leaders skilled in defending the apostolic faith. Immediately following the death of the apostles, the earliest form of theology in these churches was free from any sense of a Greek academy validated teaching, or an official teaching growing out of a centralized Roman church. It grew and flourished as a sort of noncentralized federation of churches, maturing and multiplying throughout the world. It was clearly a local church-based movement.

Toward a New Paradigm: Doing Church-Based Theology in Culture

One of the main reasons we need to work towards a new paradigm in doing theology today, and at one level, break with the traditions of the Western church, is that important aspects of the New Testament didache have been lost in the marrying of theological discussion to the academy, creating Western philosophy, and that philosophy has set the categories and questions more than the Scriptures themselves. Also, the official church (Roman Catholicism and eventually a majority of the Protestant church) has remained more committed to the official church traditions (creeds, catechism, etc.) than to the apostles' doctrine, in all its completeness.

[7] *Essentials of Sound Doctrine*, BILD-International Leadership Series I course, currently being field tested.

[8] A very significant body of writing on the early church has emerged in the last couple of decades, which contributes significantly to understanding the early churches and the process of establishing them in the apostles teaching. Some of the more helpful texts include*: The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastorals*, by David Verner (Scholars press, 1983*), Paul and the Thessalonians* (Fortress, 1987), *Paul and The Popular Philosophers* (Fortress, 1989), *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Fortress, 1983), all by Abraham Malherbe, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries*, by Wayne Meeks (Yale, 1993) and *Heirs of Paul: Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and in the Church Today*, by J. Christian Beker (Fortress, 1991).

How do we go about this new theological process in a way which is both critical, in the sense that we do not ignore the insights and lessons of the church through the centuries and are well informed of our culture and historical times; and yet set free from the trappings of our Western conversation to freely approach doing theology in culture?

Guiding Principles:

1. *The process of doing church-based theology in culture must be truly church-based at its very heart and soul.* Ever since the early church the process has been primarily rooted in the academy and in official theology of the centralized, institutional church. But, in the traditions of the early churches, evidenced in Irenaeus and the Antiochian tradition, theology was done naturally, as part of the life of the churches. In the process of shepherding believers and guarding the truth in their churches, leaders addressed the issues which surfaced as part of establishing the churches and their witness in the world. Theology in all cases was a matter of establishing churches and their witness in the world. Today the whole concept of doing theology must be rethought. Was Jesus "doing theology in culture" when He was training the twelve? Was Paul doing theology when he was establishing the churches? Karl Barth, who many consider to be the father and very early forerunner of this new emerging historical paradigm of the church, put it well in a paper given to the Protestant Theological Faculty, April 10-12, 1934, in Paris.

> "Theology is not a private reserve of theologians. It is not a private affair for professors. Happily, there have always been pastors who understood it better than most professors. Nor is it a private affair for pastors. Happily, there have always been church members and many congregations who have discharged its function quietly but vigorously while their pastors were theological babes and barbarians. Theology is a matter for the church. It does not get on well without pastors and professors. But its problem, the purity of the church's service, is put to the whole church. There are in principle no non-theologians in the church. The term "laity" is one of the worst in the vocabulary of religion and ought to be banished from Christian conversation."

We need to return the primary task of doing theology in culture to the churches, who are in the process of becoming established, and working out their witness, in community, amongst a culture in which it desires to dramatically impact with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. *The process of doing church-based theology in culture must be biblically based in its overall approach*. This is difficult to sort out as well, since today much of our hermeneutical methods and systems of doing theology are so far removed from the church that it actually, at times, gets in the way of the church doing good theology. Hermeneutics were distorted by the Catholic church in the medieval years, using allegory to validate interpretations not defensible from the literal Scriptures; and by the scientific approach of the enlightenment church, which reduced the beauty of a community of faith doing theology in dialogue, to an individualistic, almost scientific enterprise for professionals, if not in practice, at least in the minds of the

churches. Theology itself has been dominated by a pattern of systematizing which we call systematic theology. Western systematic theology has its roots in Western philosophy, which has its roots in the Greek academy. While at one time called dogmatics, out of a design to defend the faith of the churches, contemporary systematic theology poses a series of questions and a way of categorizing which is quite foreign to matters of the churches. It does fit quite comfortably in academia. The whole system needs to be rethought. Two evangelicals who have done tremendous work, calling for us to fundamentally rethink these systems are Walter Kaiser and Elliott Johnson[9]. Johnson, along with Kaiser are calling for a hermeneutical revolution in which we develop a focus on the author's intended meaning as expressed in a biblical text. Kaiser has gone further than hermeneutics alone, and is calling for us to rethink our manner of theologizing as well, turning our attention to a relatively recent discipline - biblical theology. The biblical theology movement, attributed by many to Brevard Child[10], himself a new paradigm thinker in the tradition of Karl Barth, focuses on allowing the biblical canon to speak for itself and a method of study in which the Scriptures are studied in the order in which they were written. This allows themes to surface and make their own emphases, with a categorization system of theology set in tune with these emphases. The problem today, is that our church traditions and theological institutions are dominated by systematic theology, which is often our starting point for doing theology. A careful, disciplined, biblical theology approach will obliterate our Western, systematic theology approach and categories. We have to radically adjust our method to a purely biblical-based approach if we ever expect churches to do fresh, relevant theology in culture.

3. *The process of doing church-based theology must be done in the culture in which the churches are being established, and by those churches themselves.* One of the most respected educational theorists worldwide, Paulo Freire[11], has demonstrated quite convincingly, that effective education of "the people" involves engaging them in a problem-posing process, from the base of their culture and current life situation. In this process they begin to interact with the larger world and its knowledge base, and through that interaction develop a "critical consciousness", and are able to put that new knowledge to use in their lives and impact the culture in which they live. William Dyrness, in his book *Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology: Case Studies in Vernacular Theologies*, builds on the same idea, although he does not

[9] *Expository Hermeneutic: An Introduction*, by Elliott Johnson (Zondervan, 1990). *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, by Walter Kaiser (Baker, 1983).

[10] Three books are most helpful in understanding Childs and the biblical theology movement: *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Westminster, 1970), *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Fortress, 1979), and *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament* (Fortress, 1992).

[11] His two most important books, and must reading for any educator, are Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Continuum, 1984) and Education for Critical Consciousness (Continuum, 1994). Other helpful works include Learning to Ask Questions: A Pedagogy of Liberation (Continuum, 1992), Pedagogy of the City (Continuum, 1993) and Pedagogy of Hope (Continuum , 1994). Also helpful is a book by a long time comrade Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work, by Moacir (Suny, 1994).

work with Freire's material. He examines the theology of five movements of churches, four in developing countries. He asks the question how can they develop theologically, building on their foundation, which he calls their "vernacular theology"? This theology is often much like that of the early New Testament churches. That is, how can they get into the theological conversation worldwide, grow in their understanding, and thus do theology in culture, without being corrupted by the Western churches? He concludes that they must learn to do theology themselves, in their culture, and develop what Freire calls a "critical consciousness".

What might this process actually look like? Several significant models have been recently set forth by very substantive theologians who have a tremendous understanding of the paradigmatic issues being set forth in this paper. Their ideas are well worth reflecting upon. The first is Harvie Conn[12], who advocates doing biblical theology in culture, carefully reasoning why it should be the foundation of the process. A second is Edward Farley[13] who advocates returning to the wisdom tradition of the pre-enlightenment days. He calls for a three step process: 1) interpretation of tradition, where we examine the deep structure of the roots of our traditions to create awareness; 2) interpretation of truth, where we revisit the Scriptures (and other source documents); and 3) interpretation of action, where the church builds whole new categories of theology in culture. Building upon Farley, Don Browning[14] adds an additional and final stage in the process, which he calls strategic practical theology. He calls on the church to build whole new ministry paradigms through this process. Browning also believes that this theologizing should take place in community, and illustrates the validity of this process by working his model out in the community life of four different churches.

Our new paradigm must encourage churches to evaluate their existing theology in light of the New Testament didache, and develop more in-depth theological understanding, while preserving the natural "theologizing process" in which all dynamic church movements have emerged.

4. *The process of doing church-based theology must be rooted in a true sense of an international movement, especially in the emergence of respect for the theologizing process of Third World churches*. Every indication is, that all Western cultures are truly post-Christian, and the Western church will continue on its nominal course. If the Western church has to spend a significant amount of its time digging itself out of its traditions, and reeducating its congregations, while many of the Two-Thirds World churches are able to start fresh in a sense, building

[12] *Eternal Word Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology and Mission in Trialogue,* by Harvie Conn (Zondervan, 1984). Note especially chapter 6, "Theology and Theologizing: A New Course".

[13] *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church & University*, by Edward Farley (Fortress, 1988). Especially note chapter 7, "The Structure of Theological Study: Mapping the Terrain".

[14] *A Fundamental Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*, by Don S. Browning (Fortress, 1991).

its first level "New Testament didache type" theology, we can expect some of the most innovative and stimulating theology to come from these young developing churches. The interchange process may ultimately be more needed by the Western churches than the developing churches. Those of us from the west must shed our colonial Western type thinking, and learn to hold our Western tradition with healthy suspicion. All of us regardless of our traditions or place in the world, must do what we can to foster a genuine fellowship of local churches worldwide, engaged in doing theology in culture.

A Working Model:

We want to put forth a rather simple process for doing theology in culture. It assumes a church-based context, much as described in these three church-based articles. This process is diagrammed in Figure 2, "Doing Theology in Culture". Note that this is just an overview; the whole process demands an article itself in order to fully explain the concepts. The process involves three basic phases:

Phase 1: Build a Framework from Scripture

Most "theology in culture" models pass over this stage very quickly, yet this is where we lay the entire foundation upon which we will build our cultural categories and ministry paradigms. Even though the phases are cyclical and in one sense always going on simultaneously - as the theologizing process is by nature a constant exercise of the churches - it will take several years for a group of churches to lay this framework from Scripture in a careful and disciplined manner. This process involves revisiting the apostolic teaching as delivered to the first churches, and establishing our churches in this teaching. Then it is necessary to get a grasp on the Scriptures as a whole, including each major era or division of Scripture, including the argument and intent of each book, and all of the major teaching passages. The final aspect of this stage is to develop a biblical theology (longitudinal themes and major topics as they naturally unfold in the Scriptures), which will actually become the clay for molding ministry paradigms and actually doing theology in culture.[15]

Phase 2: Systematically Address Cultural Issues and Questions

This phase is important because it involves beginning to match biblical ideas with the ideas, issues and questions of a given culture and begins the process of framing the truths of Scripture in such a way that the church matures in culture, becoming able to problem solve and address tough issues. This enables it to guard the truth in the midst of competing cultural ideas; against distortions of the truth which will arise from within the church; and to fully penetrate the culture in which it resides with the truths of the gospel. To "theologize" properly at this stage, it is important for churches to build fresh categories and questions out of their culture and to truly interact with the biblical categories from disciplined biblical theology

[15] This process (sections to books to teaching passages to biblical theology) is patterned after Walter Kaiser's two ground breaking works - *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Baker, 1981) and *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Zondervan, 1978).

study. It is tempting here, especially for developing churches, to turn to Western systematic theology, with its questions and categories, rather than beginning to do its own theology in culture. The reason that this should be avoided is not so much that systematics can't transcend culture (although it almost never does because even good systematics needs to be rooted in culture), but that Western systematic theology has been dominated by the academy and the official church since the early church. It is on a different agenda, often asking fundamentally different questions from those who are doing theology in the life of the local church. Several recent works have surfaced which can help guide us in this process[16], but it is often by just the natural process, over a period of years of establishing churches and doing disciplined biblical theology, that the cultural categories begin to emerge.

Phase 3: Develop Practical Theology for Ministry

The essence of this phase is ministry "paradigm building" in culture. Churches will eventually develop common ministry structures to do ministry on a broad level among the churches. Some of our paradigms today include youth ministry, Sunday school, seminaries, and Christian counseling. We all know how they work, and they may or may not fit well with the basic patterns set forth for the churches in the teaching deposited to the New Testament. Here we need to build slowly, taking care that our initial ministry strategies, which often grow into whole paradigms for doing ministry, are laid consistently with the "first principles" of Christ (the apostles teaching) and not the "first principles" of the world, or of our Western traditions. We will often need to take time, at this stage, as suggested by Browning, Farley and others, to examine our own "deep structures of tradition and practice" in order to see past our man-made ministry paradigms which are rooted in syncretistic cultural practices - often the problem in developing churches, or in deep church traditions - often the problem in established Western churches. This is the most challenging and exciting phase of the process. To see a model of this entire process, see appendix II of this article, taken from the final project guide in the BILD-International Leadership Series II course entitled "Doing Theology in Culture".[17]

It may be helpful to note here that the BILD curriculum is consistent with the entire "doing theology in culture" process described in this article. It has grown out of this process in the life of a local church as it attempted to establish itself in its cultural setting; build new ministry paradigms; and raise its critical consciousness for more effective ministry here and around the world. It has been effectively used, tested and improved by being used in the life of other churches in various parts of the world. It has taken twenty years to work it out in culture, including a ten year process of

[16] One of the most practical is a recent book by Robert Banks, *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Light* (Victor Books, 1993). I also find the several books by William Dyrness very stimulating in this regard: *Old Testament Theology* (IVP,), *Christian Apologetic* (IVP, 1983), *Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology* (Zondervan, 1992) and *Learning About Theology from the Third World* (Zondervan, 1990). As far as the broad cultural categories of a post-modern paradigmatic nature, Bosch and Kung are very helpful.

[17] *Doing Theology in Culture*, BILD-International Leadership Series II course, currently in design phase.

shifting from Western systematic theology to a thoroughly biblical theology approach. The church is still in the painful process of retooling its ministry paradigms, in a culture often resistant to change. It will take another ten years to finish the biblical theology side of the curriculum (of which it is already fifteen years into that process, and 30%-80% completed, depending upon the course.

The curriculum itself is now structured to guide churches through the "theologizing" process of this article. All of the courses take into account the complete theologizing process described above, and are designed in such a way as to facilitate each local church interactively "theologizing in community".

> Leadership Series I is designed to guide churches through revisiting the apostolic tradition - the didache, the first principles, in a careful and disciplined manner.
>
> Leadership Series II is designed to take churches through the entire process in a more in-depth way, gaining a grasp of the whole of the Scripture; carefully constructing a complete biblical theology; guiding the first steps in systematically addressing cultural issues and categories and developing practical theology for ministry.

It is also structured to help churches encounter the Scriptures in somewhat the same order and manner as the early churches did themselves (part of a biblical theology approach), first getting the apostles' doctrine, with special emphasis on Paul, whose job was to bring to light God's plan and administration for the churches, and then against the backdrop of the entire Scriptures. The BILD curriculum is just one example of the new type of resources needed to help equip churches in this emerging post-modern world.

Conclusion:

By extensive interaction with the Scriptures themselves, accompanied by a careful reflection on our own deep traditions, we can begin to address cultural issues and questions and develop practical ministry paradigms, which accurately reflect the apostolic teachings, and address afresh contemporary culture. This theology in culture needs to grow out of the churches, not the academy or the official church; out of churches who are establishing themselves and their witness in the world - church-based theology.

The church-based movement, and church-based theology is not about renewing traditional seminaries and mission agencies. It is not about putting new wine in old wineskins. It is not about reengineering. It is not about propagating our particular tradition. It is about lateral thinking. It is about radical thinking. It is about returning to our foundations and rediscovering the centrality of the local church in a way which has not been fully seen since the early church. It is about churches all over the world, in partnership with other churches as they seek to do theology afresh, revisiting the didache of the New Testament, and building paradigms for this new time in history.

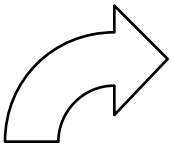
Doing Theology in Culture:

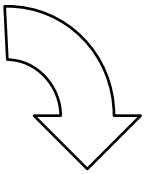
Building an Apostolic Belief Framework

Figure 2

Build a Framework from Scripture

- identify the essentials of sound doctrine (i.e. the apostolic kerygma and didache)
- summarize the basic message of scripture (world view statement)
- do extensive biblical theology work (theology of books, teaching passages, authors, sections of scripture, testaments, longitudinal themes, major topics, etc.)



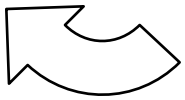


Systematically Address Cultural Issues and Categories

- basic cultural challenges to Christianity (defense of the faith-apologetics)
- social, political and economic issues and problems of a culture (response of believing community to the culture around them)
- differing world view and religious of the culture (how to relate, love, defend faith)
- everyday living in the community and the world (family, money, work, relationships, time, priorities, ministries, etc.)

Develop Practical Theology for Ministry

- evaluate current ministries in light of scripture and culture
- personal/family ministry strategies (outreach, work, community service, education, use of gifts, time, money, etc.)
- church ministry strategies (assisting churches in need worldwide, relief and development, outreach in the community, pastoral care



Appendix I: Traditions, Patterns and Sound Doctrine in the Church

The Growth of Apostolic Doctrine:

There is a body of teaching delivered by Christ to the apostles that was intended to be followed by all the churches that includes a core body of teaching as well as a way of life to be lived out by churches everywhere. This teaching should be carefully built into the infrastructure of the life of every new church and every new believer. ("all the churches" cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1-2,16; 7:17; 14:33; 8:16-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:4)

Existence of this Body of Teaching:

In Acts: The apostles' teaching - Acts 2:42

From its inception, the church recognized the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42). This teaching, which began orally and grew throughout the life of the church in the form of letters by the apostles and their key fellow workers, was considered authoritative for the churches and was referred to as the apostles' doctrine or teaching, the deposit of faith, the faith, the doctrine, etc. The churches referred to the core gospel of this teaching as the kerygma, and the teaching of ordered living in the community as the didache. Despite distinguishing the two by name, there was much overlap in these categories, both in the New Testament and in the writings of the early church.

In Paul's Writings:

- Early writings: traditions, instructions, commandments

  Paul understood that what he was delivering to the churches was a body of teachings that he received from the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:2), and that they were to be followed by all of the churches. On several occasions he referred to the traditions they had received from him. The term "traditions" (from the Greek word "paradosis" - that which is passed on) refers to the teaching delivered by Paul and the other apostles. This seemed to be the way Paul summarized this teaching in his early letters and is the concept picked up in church history, especially by the Catholic church when it refers to three authorities: the Bible, tradition, and the papal system. (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; 1 Corinthians 11:2; also Colossians 2:8). The Colossians passage helps us remember that we are just referring to Paul's emphasis of terms at different stages of writing, not rigid categories, such as only using paradosis in his early letters. Obviously, he uses the term in Colossians, emphasizing that we are only looking at patterns, which are none-the-less very useful. He referred to the people who would not follow this teaching as unruly (from the Greek word "ataktos"), which refers to someone who is out of step or disorderly (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,11).

- middle writings: rule of faith, pattern, and elementary principles

  In his middle writings, Paul challenged the churches to stay with the system or standard of truth which he taught them and they saw in him.

Two key words appear: "attitude" (from the Greek word "phroneo"), which refers to a way of thinking or pattern of thinking and living (Philippians 2:5; 3:15), and "standard" (from the Greek word "stoikion" or "stoikeo"), which refers to the rule or standard of faith delivered by Paul (Colossians 2:8,20; Philippians 3:16; Galatians 4:3,9; 5:25; 6:16). Paul also referred to this body of truth as the faith, which he was delivering (cf. with the Greek word "pistis" in Acts 16:5; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 13:5). Again, Paul expected them to be obedient to the faith, to be solidly in it, and to strive for its preservation. It is interesting to note that the concept of the rule of faith was the first term the early churches in the second century used to describe their summaries of the apostles' doctrine, which later grew into the creeds.

- later letters: deposit of sound doctrine, and sound principles

Paul began focusing more on the soundness of this doctrine or teaching in his last letters, which were written to his two key leaders: Timothy and Titus. He knew that many would come along after his death and try to distort the doctrine he had left the churches, not only its accuracy, but its soundness, as well. This infers that he understood his doctrine not as merely a system of truths, but a way of life also. The core truths of the faith could never be divorced from the conduct of the believers. Paul referred to this body of truth as a deposit, which he entrusted to Timothy. He told Timothy to retain the "standard" (from the Greek word "hupotuposis" - outline sketch, ground plan, rough draft forming the basis of a fuller exposition, Linguistic Key) of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13) of this deposit. The main term Paul used in these letters was "sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:10; 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1-2). Doctrine is from the Greek word "didache" or "didaskolos," which refers to the teaching that had been entrusted to Paul, which he passed on to the churches. It is now the responsibility of faithful men like Timothy and Titus to help preserve the deposit of sound doctrine and entrust it to others who can in turn teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). The result is a perpetual preservation of the apostolic deposit to the churches. This teaching centered around the kerygma, which was the proclamation of the gospel, and the didache, which was the teaching that all believers and churches needed to orient their lives around.

In the General Epistles:

The General Epistles refer to the teaching as the faith delivered to the apostles. A concern among these writers, especially Peter and Jude, was the preservation of the faith from false teachers. The spirit of these letters is probably best summarized by Jude, who called the believers "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The writers of these epistles had clear understanding of the existence of a body of truth, delivered by the apostles, that was once for all delivered to the churches to be followed carefully.

Role of Apostolic Doctrine in Shaping and Stabilizing the Early Churches

Paul, his team, and the other apostolic leaders saw it as one of their primary responsibilities to establish these new churches in the body of teaching delivered to them. They referred to the teaching by many names: the traditions, the faith, the apostolic doctrine, etc., which is detailed above. In Paul's work with the Thessalonians we have one of the clearest pictures of how this body of truth shaped the early churches; how others came along to try to challenge this teaching; and how the apostles fought this effort, and used it to stabilize and establish the churches. The process is visualized on the chart "Establishing the Thessalonian Community." Paul expected the churches to hold to the traditions - the teaching which he delivered to them, and had received from Christ. Anyone who did not was considered unruly, and eventually had to be dealt with firmly. These traditions included the gospel and all directives, both propositional and ethical, conduct type truth. As seen on the chart, there was a normal process which all churches went through in order to become established, a process summarized by Malherbe in *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care.*

The Process of Establishing the Early Churches in the Apostles' Doctrine:

1. *Founding the Community* - In this stage a group of believers responded to the gospel as it was proclaimed (the kerygma), and their conversion was reinforced, by careful instruction in the gospel after they believed. The conversion needed to be reinforced, not as a desire to reform, but as a dynamic conversion, a transfer, on the basis of God's work, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. (1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12)

2. *Shaping the Community* - In this stage the church was instructed in the traditions (the teaching, the didache) of the apostles. This was a body of teaching delivered by the apostles, which all churches and individual believers were expected to follow. Paul established the churches in this didache through three means:
    a. by teaching the church initially 2:1-12
    b. by returning to visit the church 2:13-20
    c. by sending a team member if he was not able to go 3:1-10

3. *Stabilizing the Community* - In this stage, which seemed inevitable for every church to pass through, almost as if it was a necessary part of the maturing process, Paul had to reinforce his teaching by clarification and exhortation. This was partly because many followed him around, or followed after him, trying to get the churches out from under his influence. Again, Paul followed the same pattern in trying to get the churches to hold fast to the apostles' teaching: He challenged them to hold to his teaching: (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5:28; 2 Thessalonians)

    a. by sending letters which clarified his teaching and challenged them to hold firm
    b. by sending men from his team with the letters and authorizing them to deal with those who would not conform
    c. by visiting them himself if possible.

The Essentials of the Apostolic Doctrine

The apostolic doctrine itself now needs to be summarized. The early church did this in two categories: the kerygma (which centered around the gospel and its core truths, and the didache (which centered around the core teaching delivered to the church which shaped their community belief system and life together). The following is a summary of the essentials of this body of truth deposited to the churches. The two categories - the kerygma and the didache - in one sense are arbitrary, and overlap, or may completely include the other in some texts, but are useful for summary purpose, and fairly reflective of the order of the delivery and the early categorization of this deposit as it was made. Besides the careful review of the New Testament letters, in the order they were written, two books have greatly influenced this summary:

The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development, by C.H. Dodd
Gospel and Law, by C.H. Dodd

The Kerygma:

1. This gospel was prophesied beforehand in the Scriptures, as part of God's unfolding plan to bless the families of the earth through the seed of David, in the form of a New Covenant in which there would be forgiveness of sin, and a placing of God's Spirit within man.
2. This gospel was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the seed of David, the King of Kings, born of the Holy Spirit, who came in the flesh, lived a sinless life, died, was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
3. This Jesus will come again to judge the earth, and set up the kingdom of God for all time, and after having abolished all rule and authority, will reign forever and ever.
4. Those who hear this message, and believe, will receive forgiveness of sins, and be given the Spirit of God as a pledge of their inheritance as they eagerly await the Savior who will return for them.
   (Galatians 1:1-5; 3:1-18; 1 Corinthians 15; Romans 1:1-7; 4:24,25; Ephesians 1:1-3:21; Colossians 1:9,10; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:1-5)

The Didache:

1. Each believer is instructed to lay aside his old life, renew His mind in the teaching, and conform his new life to the will of God. (Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 12:1,2)
2. A set of virtues, only possible through God's resources, are to characterize each believer. (Galatians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Peter 1:1-11)
3. Individual households must be ordered properly, consistent with God's created design for man and for the Church. (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Peter 3:1-7)
4. God's household, the church, the pillar and support of the truth, must be properly ordered according to sound doctrine received from the apostles, especially Paul. (1 Timothy 3:14-16; Titus 1:5-2:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; Ephesians 3:1-13; Colossians 1:24-29)
5. Each must be committed to do his part, both generally in one another ministry, and specifically in the use of his gifts in the building up of the church. (Romans 12:3-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6)
6. A pattern of relationships within the church must be observed, characterized by love, brotherhood, mutual acceptance and respect, in

which each is to diligently pursue unity in the bond of peace. (Romans 12:9-15; 14:1-7; Philippians 1:27-2:4; Ephesians 4:1-6)

7. A pattern of relationships in the world must be observed, characterized by respect for government, employees and other authorities, and love and good deeds toward neighbors and those in need. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 2:14; 3:1,14)
8. Each must lead a responsible and sober life, working hard, providing for his own, making the most of the time (because the days are evil) and keeping on the alert for Satan and his strategies. (Ephesians 5:1-22; 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Peter 5:6-11)

Appendix II: Toward a Belief Framework in Culture

Phase 1: Build a Belief Framework in Culture:

I. The Essentials of Sound Doctrine

The apostolic doctrine itself now needs to be summarized. The early church did this in two categories: the kerygma (which centered around the gospel and its core truths, and the didache (which centered around the core teaching delivered to the church which shaped their community belief system and life together). The following is a summary of the essentials of this body of truth deposited to the churches. The two categories - the kerygma and the didache - in one sense are arbitrary, and overlap, or may completely include the other in some texts, but are useful for summary purpose, and fairly reflective of the order of the delivery and the early categorization of this deposit as it was made. Besides the careful review of the New Testament letters, in the order they were written, two books have greatly influenced this summary:

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3. This Jesus will come again to judge the earth, and set up the kingdom of God for all time, and after having abolished all rule and authority, will reign forever and ever.
4. Those who hear this message, and believe, will receive forgiveness of sins, and be given the Spirit of God as a pledge of their inheritance as they eagerly await the Savior who will return for them.
(Galatians 1:1-5; 3:1-18; 1 Corinthians 15; Romans 1:1-7; 4:24,25; Ephesians 1:1-3:21; Colossians 1:9,10; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:1-5)

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4. God's household, the church, the pillar and support of the truth, must be properly ordered according to sound doctrine received from the apostles, especially Paul. (1 Timothy 3:14-16; Titus 1:5-2:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; Ephesians 3:1-13; Colossians 1:24-29)
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7. A pattern of relationships in the world must be observed, characterized by respect for government, employees and other authorities, and love and good deeds toward neighbors and those in need. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 2:14; 3:1,14)
8. Each must lead a responsible and sober life, working hard, providing for his own, making the most of the time (because the days are evil) and keeping on the alert for Satan and his strategies. (Ephesians 5:1-22; 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Peter 5:6-11)

II. Summary of Biblical Message Statement and Biblical World View

(Developed in the *Covenants, Unity of Scripture and Biblical World View* course.)

Central Message Statement:

To unfold the central plan (eternal purpose) of God, in which He redeems for Himself a people for all eternity, demonstrating His manifold wisdom to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places, supplying His people who are commissioned to be a witness to His purpose, with a book which contains all the essential insights and guidance needed to effectively assist Him in carrying out His purpose

by setting the stage for the revealing of His plan in the narration of the creation and fall of man, along with the glimmer of a promise of restoration imbedded in the curse to the woman and traced up to the seed of Abraham, as well as giving insight into the major themes necessary to understand to live in harmony with God's created order, and man's propensity to resist that order (Gen. 1-11)

by revealing the promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham and his descendants, sovereignly forming those descendants into a nation through whom God would reveal Himself and His plan to all the other nations, contracting with the nation concerning how they should live, as well as giving insight into living by faith in the plan of God, and man's propensity to resist that plan and go his own way (Gen. 12-Deut. 34)

by recording the history of the nation of Israel, through which God sovereignly continued to unfold His plan, revealing an additional aspect of His promise to bless all the families of the earth in the covenant with David, which looks forward to a coming seed of David who would rule forever, continuing to give insight into living by faith in the plan of God, again emphasizing and illustrating man's propensity to resist that plan and go his own way (Joshua through Esther)

by preserving the psalms of David and those who wrote in his tradition, providing the people with a sort of "divine hymnbook" for worship and reflection by the people of God, both individually and corporately, that they might internalize the Word up through the Davidic era, and continuing down to the post-exilic time, that they might acquire a heart for God (Psalms)

by preserving the wisdom of Solomon and those who wrote in his tradition, providing the people with a sort of "divine guide to skillful living" for use in all areas of family, community and national life, that they might acquire a heart of wisdom (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon)

by recording the prophetic word of the prophets, who called Israel to court for her constant disobedience to the Law (Mosaic) covenant, announcing impending judgment, while providing an ever broadening picture of the coming Messiah and the New Covenant which would replace the Old (Mosaic) Covenant which would lead to all the promises to Israel being fulfilled, giving the people of God insight into the true condition of their hearts and exhortations to proper repentance and a godly morality (Isaiah - Malachi)

by interpreting in narrative form, the transition between the Old and New Covenants, in four different accounts of the life and ministry of Christ, in which Jesus and His offer of the kingdom was rejected, and a new phase in the plan of God revealed - His church - in which Christ gathers together and begins building this new community over which no force, even the gates of Hades, would be able to prevail, as well as giving keen insight into true faith and commitment, and principles for living life under the New Covenant (Matthew - John)

by recording, in narrative form, the expansion and establishment of Christ's new covenant community, His church, and in the letters of Paul, establishing the churches in the gospel and in the details of Christ's plan for the building and functioning of His church - a design which when followed will ultimately cause the rulers and authorities in heavenly places to recognize the manifold wisdom of God, giving insight into living in Christ as individuals, as families and as local churches (Acts & Paul's epistles)

by recording, in letters from other apostles, instructions designed to protect and establish the churches, with special emphasis on handling false doctrine of a Jewish nature (Hebrews - Jude)

by recording, in the apocalyptic visions of John, the consummation of the whole plan of God, bringing to finality all of the motifs begun in Genesis 1-11, as well as giving us a model, in Jesus' evaluation of the seven churches, of how to keep perspective amidst physical and spiritual warfare, remaining a faithful witness for Jesus (Revelation)

Basic Statement of World View:

The universe is under the sovereign direction and control of the God revealed in the Biblical Canon and He has a plan for His creation, which is unfolding toward an end in which He will return and set up His kingdom through His Son Jesus Christ, to which all history points. Until such time, He has directed His church, under the authority and direction of His Word, and in the midst of a fallen world under the control of Satan, to carry out His purposes - until Christ returns for His Church

Corollary Universal Realities:

1. One can expect both history and life to be consistent with the Scriptures, as well as find all the life direction and guidance needed for all the choices and decisions which one will face throughout his life.

2. Carrying out God's purpose will always be met with a certain opposition since Satan is in control of the world in which we live and the spirit of the age will be running contrary to the direction and purposes of God.

3. Christ's church is at the center of the purpose and plan of God for this time, therefore the purpose of God which should drive the believer today ought to be the purpose for the church - which can be summarized as follows: To be subservient to Christ as He seeks to build His church and ultimately His kingdom, which primarily involves maturing in Christ as individuals and as a community, impacting our own community with the gospel, and becoming a participant in the progress of the gospel worldwide - evangelizing new communities as God opens doors and helping existing churches throughout the world become established, mature and multiply.

4. With Church at the center of God's plan for this age, the question growing out of the covenants is what will happen to Israel in the future. It appears, that since the covenants are rooted in historical reality, that they will have to be historically fulfilled in the future, leading one to believe that the promises to Israel will be historically fulfilled in the future.

5. As a Christian, I must be careful how I use the Old Testament and the Gospels, since they were written or recorded events of those under the Mosaic Covenant. Those portions of Scripture are just as important in the life of the churches and individual believers, when carefully interpreted., as the rest of the New Testament.

III. Biblical Theology Work

The Scriptures are our database for systematically addressing the cultural issues and categories in the next phase of our process of building a belief framework in culture. The following is an outline guide of the types of contributions each section of Scripture makes to this overall framework. The eight biblical studies courses in the Leadership Series II are designed to do extensive work in each of these divisions.

The Pentateuch

- All foundational concepts of a world view: revelation of God's person, creation questions, purpose on earth, man and woman, marriage, family, history framework - nations,
- lives of believers
- life situations and choices

  The narrative books are excellent for seeing the whole lives of believers, as well as being able to see the individual choices they made, and how they handled their problems. An excellent tool would be to develop a life-development time

line of all of the major (and eventually minor) biblical characters to use as prototypes for use in counseling. The lives of those we are seeking to help will parallel at least one biblical character.

The Former Prophets

- A continuation of the Pentateuch
- Development of God's covenants and plan of history

The Latter Prophets

- A continuation of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets
- Issues of the nations and the future - justice, sin, wealth, poverty, etc. particularly helpful in developing the broad questions of other religions, world affairs, economic, political and social problems

The Writings

Wisdom Literature

- Proverbs--general skill in living life
  The main topics include: character development, work, honest and fair practices, good use of money, a well-ordered home, an excellent wife, discipline of children, dealing wisely and fairly with people, control of emotions and words, handling conflict, living harmoniously in community, dealing with authorities.
- Ecclesiastes--meaning and purpose in life
  This book is excellent for dealing with life's inequities, as well as finding its meaning and purpose. Excellent to build an apologetic, philosophical framework
- Song of Solomon--skill in romantic love and marriage

Psalms

The psalms are excellent for dealing with all sorts of problems. This can best be visualized by understanding the different types of psalms. Here are just a few.

- psalms of individual laments and penitential psalms
  These are excellent for helping people through individual difficulties, the grief process, as well as working through failure, repenting, and recovering to a right relationship with God.
- psalms of trust and meditation
  These are excellent for gaining a healthy focus on life, for quieting anxiety, and building trust.
- salvation history psalms
  These are excellent for gaining perspective on life and history and a confidence in the control of God over all of life and its events.
- psalms of praise and thanksgiving
  These are excellent for keeping a positive focus in life, keeping one's heart in tune with God, and for use in song and memorization. All are key to sound emotional health. Also, the Psalms are intended to keep God's kingdom purposes and promises living in the heart of each believer.

The Gospels

- placing of Christ in the overall plan of God, clarifying the plan of God
- a complete example of living a godly life
- skill in sharing our faith
- dealing skillfully with people
- getting to underlying problems, to the real issue
- asking key questions

  The gospels expose us to the master counselor. Here we can see counseling and shepherding in full action. This material would be excellent for developing a skills manual in how to deal with people, ask questions, get to the underlying problems, and direct the person towards his greatest need: the gospel.

Acts & The Pauline Epistles

- the mission and purpose of the church
- the church in the world - in a community, under a government, as a witness
- the basic teaching delivered to the churches; their way of working and functioning
- basic teaching for the marriage and family; how to order their lives as members of Christ's church
- use of time, talents and money
- solving the basic problems of new believers - early epistles
- helping believers get their life purpose in focus - prison epistles
- helping believers stay sound and healthy, with well-ordered lives and homes - pastoral epistles

  These epistles are the heart of the training of each believer. The early epistles bring the gospel to bear on most all the problems these new believers brought with them into the churches, and focus on how to grow in the Word, and walk with the Spirit in their new lives. The middle set focuses on continuing that walk, bringing into much clearer focus their new life in Christ and the importance of devoting their lives to Him and His purposes. The final set of letters focus on sound living over the duration of their lives in community with other believers.

The General Epistles

- helping believers stay with the faith
- dealing with those who might potentially leave the faith

  These letters are a helpful resource for those who are in danger of losing their faith, or possibly returning after having left or backslidden for a period of time. They are useful also for identifying warning signs in a person which might lead to an abandonment of the faith.

Johannine Literature:

- a significant contribution to apologetics, keys to bringing about belief
- a complete view of God's plan for history: the nations, the church, Israel
- a view intended to help the churches in any culture survive the persecutions and keep perspective in light of God's overall plan

Phase 2: Systematically Address Cultural Issues & Categories:

The following is a brief example of some of the issues and categories which need to be addressed by churches in the United States as we enter the twenty-first century, churches which are well off and in a position to help less fortunate churches in our inner cities and around the world, as well as living in a declining, affluent culture.

Basic Challenges to Christianity (Defense of faith, apologetics):

- New age movement
- Exclusion of religion from schools, universities and public debate

Social, Political and Economic Issues and Problems:

- racial tensions and inequities in culture
- feminism and its cultural and familial transformations
- the social services - counseling centers, rehabilitation systems, prison system, welfare, etc.
- educational system and Christian alternatives
- relief and development - to Christians, in the community, around the world
- ethics - abortion, euthanasia, birth control, gun control, use of genetics, use of medicine to prolong life, financial and stewardship issues of health care
- use of new information society - fiber optics highway communication system, computers, media communications, satellites, travel, global information markets
- use of church resources - buildings, money, technology

Differing world view and religions:

- response to one ecumenical religion
- expansion of Islam
- sharing our faith in the new global information market place where we encounter different religions everyday

Everyday Living in community:

- careerism and the life of the church
- ethics in business
- family - marriage's role in today's society, care of parents, training of children (public, private or home schooling)
- life in an information, technological society - busyness, mobility, debt
- daily routines - commuting, shopping ,eating, sleeping, television, hospitality, eating, drinking, etc.
- use of time, talents, money
- work and leisure
- communicating and relating
- ministry - gifts, skills development, volunteer service
- care of elderly, widows, parents
- our witness in the community - time, skills, hospitality, availability, etc.

Phase 3: Develop Practical Theology for Ministry:

Evaluation of Current Ministries in Light of Scripture and Culture:

Example of the process:

See the Leadership Series I course: Counseling, Shepherding and the Early Church, which models the whole process of building from the original kerygma and didache, looking outward to the whole Scripture, critiquing the current evangelical model, and developing a practical theology model.

Personal/Family Ministry Strategies:

These are personal/family ministries which appear to need to be rethought:

- development of profession and career
- training of our children
- serious ordered religious learning as in other areas - career as an example
- use of time, talents, resources for the ministry
- household outreach strategy

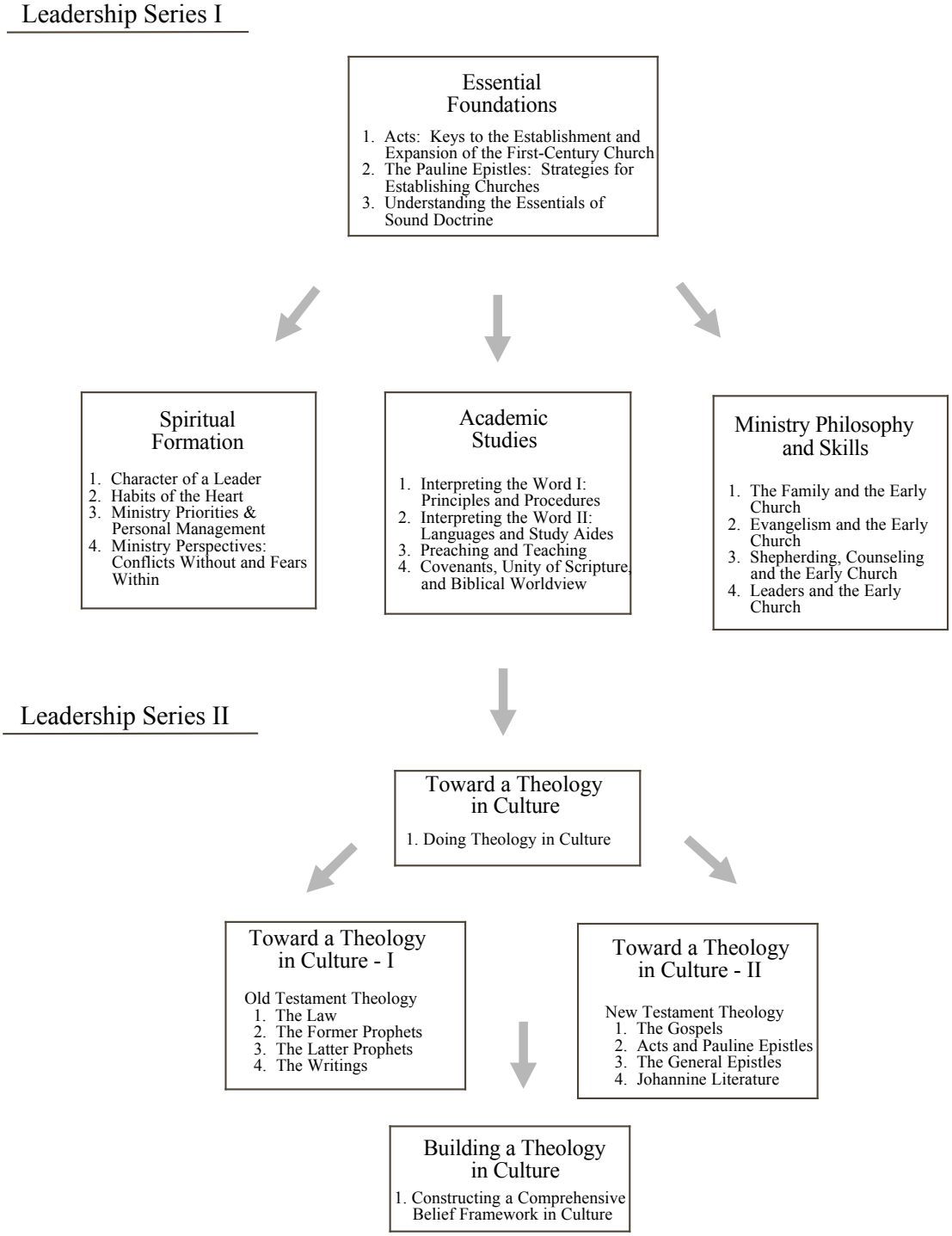
Church Ministry Strategies:

These are ministries which appear to need to be rethought:

- counseling, the church and use of psychology and psychiatry (pastoral care strategy)
- program-based church ministries
- Sunday school - the central means for training children in the faith
- a Christian subculture which separates Christians from the world (its own music, entertainment, educational systems, social gatherings, etc.)
- seminary and mission forms - in light of society paradigm shifts, institutionalization of systems and the new information society

Note on the BILD curriculum (see next page for illustration of whole curriculum):

Leadership series I is designed to lay essential ministry foundations, to the point of developing a ministry strategy for all essential ministries growing out of the kerygma and the didache, as well as to lay essential academic foundations for framing in an initial belief framework. The Leadership II series is designed to build on that initial framework with a more careful look at doing theology in culture, and then carefully developing a framework from Scripture with the eight theology in culture courses. After the data from the eight courses, it is all put back together in the last course: “Constructing a Comprehensive Belief Framework in Culture". It then should be rounded off with five additional theology in culture courses, which need to be designed for a particular culture by those in the culture itself. This will provide examples of both addressing cultural issues and categories and developing practical theology for ministry; and it will be a prototype to unleash a healthy, infinite "theological process" for the church in that culture. An example in the above culture scenario might be a course on The New Age Movement.

BILD Curriculum

Leadership Series