Revelation and Reason in Cross-Cultural Apologetics and Missiology

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"Just because he is *intelligens*, the Christian, of all men, has to discern with agonizing clarity what is conceivable by him about God himself." - Karl Barth[1]

It had been but a few short years since the end of World War II. Most Japanese young people—a young university student, Nobuko Higashi, among them—were still economically impoverished, physically malnourished and psychologically dispirited.

Pastor Nishi was most likely at home because his well-used bicycle stood in its usual place under the overhang of his house. A newcomer at the church, Nobuko Higashi was hesitant as he approached the front door but he managed a guarded *"Konnichi wa"* and waited. Acknowledging the greeting, the pastor's wife appeared almost immediately and, bowing low and repeatedly, welcomed the young visitor and showed him to a sparsely furnished adjoining room. Gazing down and away, Mr. Higashi resisted her invitation to recline on the colorful pillow Mrs. Nishi placed on the spotless *tatami* floor. He was still standing when Pastor Nishi entered the room. Adjusting his sash with one hand while extending the other in a downward gesture, the two of them assumed places on opposite sides of a low lacquerware table.

Recognizing that his young guest was extremely distraught and nervous, the pastor tried to reassure him by welcoming him both to his home and to his church. Nevertheless, Mr. Higashi sat with a faraway expression on his face seemingly unable either to come to grips with the reality of the situation or to explain the reason for his visit. The entire

scenario seemed unreal to Pastor Nishi. He was not a stranger to odd encounters but had not experienced anything quite like this. Despite his quiet assurances, kindly questioning and continued urgings, the younger man sat stoically by, gazing downward and remaining eerily silent. Finally, feigning disgust, Pastor Nishi said,

> Young man, my wife and I are most happy to have you here in our home, but if you will not tell me what your problem is, I will pray for you and then we must part company. Perhaps you can return on another day when you are feeling better and I can try to help you then.

At that point Nobuko Higashi straightened somewhat and blurted out, "Sensei, that's it! Don't you see? That's exactly it! That's the problem! There is no 'I'! 'I' don't really exist! There is no 'I' to be helped!"

The young student's sudden outburst provided just the kind of opening Pastor Nishi needed. Discovering that his young friend was enrolled in a couple of first year courses in philosophy and religion at a nearby Buddhist university, the pastor insisted that *someone* was occupying space in his house, *someone* was taking his valuable time and *someone* had a very obvious problem. *Someone*, therefore, must exist. Who, indeed, if not a young man named Nobuko Higashi with whom he was speaking?

Beginning with a comparison of Descartes' method of doubt and Gautama Buddha's doctrine of nothingness, Pastor Nishi proceeded to set nothingness and non-ego firmly in the context of the traditional Hindu-Buddhistic worldview. Then he compared and contrasted both approaches and worldviews with biblical teaching concerning the Creator God, the creation and fall of humans, and the mission and message of Jesus Christ.

Both that particular discussion and Rev. Nishi's later recounting of it occurred well over a half-century ago. Regrettably, I do not know what became of either of the principals. However, the encounter itself served to challenge the limited understanding of mission that I and numerous missionary colleagues had taken to post-war Japan as part of our "missionary outfit." And it confirmed a number of important

discoveries. First, the post-war religious search of the Japanese people was not so much for the true God as it was for a way to recover their sense of self-identity. Second, the peace for which Japanese deeply yearned was not so much "peace with God" as it was "peace of mind" and a "peace among men." Third, though Japanese people had many questions concerning Christianity, some of the more puzzling of them were not so much spiritual as political and having to do with reasons why a "Christian nation" would drop an atomic bomb on the only city in Japan thought of as "Christian" (Nagasaki) or why it would carry on nuclear tests that had to do with war and suffering, not peace and well-being. But—and most important to my present thesis—it served to underscore the fact that *some kind of coherent and rational presentation could be expected to attend Christian conversion and discipling in Japan despite the prevailing Hindu-Buddhistic worldview and the rather widespread notion (among Westerners) that Japanese people tend to think "inside out, upside down, and backwards."*[2]

The Nature and Importance of Culture

German scholars introduced ethnographic considerations into mission studies during the last decades of the nineteenth century. But, despite the depth of their commitment and their capacity for self-sacrifice, the approach of Western missionaries to Japan and Asian cultures in general was often judged to be inordinately ethnocentric even when biblically and ethnographically informed. Later on, in the United States, cultural studies assumed increasing importance before and, especially, after World War II.[3] Nevertheless, only very slowly if at all did post-war American missionaries begin to understand the cultural thinking of the Japanese to a degree that occasioned a somewhat more contextualized approach to matters having to do with Christian conversion and discipleship.

The Meaning of Culture
"Culture" is not a biblical word. Anthropologists have offered literally scores of definitions, but one that seems to have had significant staying power was offered by Clyde Kluckhohn many years ago in a

smaller volume that has come to be accepted as an early classic on the subject. "Culture," he wrote, "is a way of thinking, feeling and acting. It is the group's knowledge stored up for future use."[4] I refer to this particular definition in this context for two reasons. First, because the very first definitional reference here is to the effect that culture represents a "way of thinking." Second, and more importantly, because Kluckhohn's study makes clear the now widely recognized understanding of culture as being a purely human product. Whatever else is to be said about culture in general or any given culture, there is no major culture in all the world or all of history that is really Christian. Nor, for that matter, is there any culture that is purely Satanic. Culture is a mirror both of and for man—fallen man to be sure but still bearing the *imago Dei.*

The Relationship between Christ and Culture

As is well known, after wrestling with theological questions having to do with the relationship between Christ and culture, H. Richard Niebuhr delineated five different positions as to the nature of that relationship: Christ *against* culture; Christ *of* culture; Christ *above* culture; Christ and culture in paradox; and, Christ as *Transformer* of culture.[5] Niebuhr seems to have thought of these positions as being more or less mutually exclusive and of the approach of the Gospel of John and the epistles of John, for example, as being essentially different in outlook. If, however, we think of culture as mirroring and representing man's way of thinking, feeling and doing—as the "stored up knowledge" of people—it is not difficult to see culture as being complex and cutting across these distinctions even as man himself is a complex creature and can be understood as being both "under Christ" though "against him," as being a "reflection" of Christ as well as a "refraction" of him. *By its very nature, culture is both a "God's kind" and also a "human being's kind" of phenomenon.*[6] But if that be true, we can anticipate that the "ways of thinking" of the various macro- and micro-cultures will exhibit the "right thinking" that emanates from the *imago Dei* but also the "wrong thinking "that emanates from the Fall.

East is East and West is West?

After becoming acquainted with Indian culture, Rudyard Kipling wrote his oft-quoted lines,

> East is East and West is West
> And never the twain shall meet.[7]

Numberless students of anthropology and religion have addressed this never-meeting of East and West and various of them have labored long and hard to explain Eastern ways of thinking to Western peoples and vice-versa.[8] Many of these findings have been insightful and helpful. I have summarized some of their more important findings elsewhere and will not attempt to do so here.[9] Nevertheless, in most of these cases the approaches have been binary and failed to deal with the "ever-meeting" of East and West evident in the trinary approach of Edmund Perry, F. H. Smith and E. R. Hughes.[10]

Perry, Smith and Hughes have collaborated to delineate not two but three distinct ways of thinking germane to this discussion—those of India and China in the East on the one hand, and that of the West on the other. At first blush their trisystemic approach may seem to complicate further an already complicated picture of cognitive processes. But not so. They have greatly aided our understanding because, in their view, the differences between Eastern and Western thinking is as much (or more) a matter of priority as it is a matter of kind. People of all three cultures assign differing priorities to the three ways of thinking, but all do think in all three ways.

1) *The "conceptual/postulational thinking" of the Western world.* Western thinking is predominantly conceptual—linear, defining, categorizing, analyzing, relating separate parts to the whole. It is, as a matter of fact, the kind of thinking that is characteristic of this paper and, indeed, of most theological and philosophical inquiries. It is difficult for Westerns to imagine that the discovery and disclosure of truth can be undertaken seriously in any other way.

2) *The "concrete-relational/pictorial thinking" of China.* This kind of thinking is characteristically Chinese as evidenced in Chinese ideographic writing. Concrete-relational thinkers, such as the Chinese and most tribal peoples, tend to think and communicate in terms of

pictures, diagrams, anecdotes, symbols, objects, events and stories rather than in terms of general propositions and principles.

3) *The "psychical/intuitional thinking" of India.* According to classical Hinduism, there are basically two kinds of knowledge. The knowledge of mathematics, science and theology involves hypothesizing, analyzing and dogmatizing. It is secondary and relative. The knowledge of Brahma is immediate and attainable only by contemplation and mystical experience. It is an inner, higher and perfect knowing and is absolute. In this perfect knowing the "pure mind sees" the truth.

Now these three ways of thinking are culturally distinct and different, but in accord with what we have said about the *peoples* of various cultures being essentially the same, just so Western, Chinese and Indian peoples all think in all three ways. However, they differ in the priority they assign to the different modes of thinking. As Westerners, Americans (traditionally) give most importance to conceptual/postulational thinking; lesser importance to concrete relational/pictorial thinking and still lesser importance to psychical/ intuitional thinking. For Indians the priority is just the reverse: the Indian only "really knows" what he knows by virtue of experiencing "enlightenment." Chinese (and, I believe, most tribalists as well) give highest priority to concrete examples, pictures, stories and events, and least to "enlightenment experiences" as primary avenues to truth.[11]

It is to be acknowledged, of course, that the thinking of cultures change as do other aspects of culture. In fact, some scholars have observed that, currently, the East is becoming more "Western" in its thinking while the West itself is becoming more "Eastern." Nevertheless, though significant, these changes may prove to be more superficial than appearances would indicate. At any rate, *people of all cultures basically arrive at their "stored up knowledge" in various combinations of these three ways of thinking as Perry, Smith and Hughes suggest.* To the degree this is so, their proposal is especially helpful to Western Christian apologists and missionaries because we can anticipate that, as a result of the imago Dei, the employment of cogent, coherent and consistent reasoning will be both appropriate and effective in Eastern cultures. At the same time we can anticipate that due to our fallen nature, God-given rationality will be rather easily

transmuted into rationalism and irrationalism in both Eastern and Western cultures. Divine revelation will serve both to complement and complete, and to compensate and correct, ways of thinking and knowing in all cultures.

Revelation, Reason and Contextualization —the Japanese Case

Why is it that the percentage of Japanese who are Christian has been, and still remains, so unimaginably small after a century and a half of Protestant missions, and especially after the unprecedented evangelistic effort that followed World War II? Having been partner to the post-war missionary effort in Japan and an observer of evangelical missions for well over half a century, it is perhaps appropriate that I reflect on the Japan case and employ it as the basis for some observations on the evangelical missionary effort in general. Others have taken special notice of other modes of revelation especially germane to the Japanese case. (For example, Little demonstrates that, at various times and in certain circumstances, God reveals himself and his will through theophanies, miraculous events, dreams and visions, and so on.[12]) I will focus mainly on special revelation in Christ and Scripture and the "cognitive/postulational" way of thinking.

Authentic Christian contextualization is not primarily a matter of condescendingly catering to the desires and wants of a people given their cultural patterns and circumstances. It is rather a way of employing cultural forms to respond Christianly and meaningfully to their needs as defined by God and disclosed in their culture.

Japanese Culture and the Japanese Way of Thinking

One reason why Japanese culture is so complex and difficult for foreigners to understand is that the Japanese worldview is what may be called "multireligious"—a composite of various religious worldviews with a generous dash of secularism thrown into the mix. The Japanese worldview cannot really be called syncretistic because little synthesis has been achieved. In order to understand the worldview of Japan, one must study at least the main features of tribalism, polytheism,

Shintoism, Mahayana Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and also naturalism, secularism and scientism. At a practical level, one must be able to recognize which of these worldviews is most operative at any given juncture in the life of the nation, family or individual.

It follows that "Japanese thinking" is also multireligious and, often, secularist. Little wonder that Westerners especially have serious problems in Japan when it comes to understanding why their Japanese counterparts in business, education, politics and church make the decisions that they do; do not make the decisions that "simple logic" would dictate; and readily change a decision when it becomes uncomfortable for one reason or another. But that is part and parcel of living and working in Japanese culture.

The Propagation Methodology of Soka Gakkai Buddhism

At a time when Christian observers were inquiring as to the number of Christian "converts" who did not follow through and become members of Christian churches in Japan, missionaries on the scene were inquiring as to causes for the rapid growth of "new religions" and especially Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai Buddhism. In a few short years, the Soka Gakkai had rapidly become one of the most rapidly growing religions in the world and a third force in Japanese politics.

The Soka Gakkai is a lay organization started just prior to World War II by two disillusioned educators, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, who opposed the Imperial Rescript on Education and Japanese chauvinism. In post-war Japan, it provoked the most criticism and evoked the most envy at one and the same time. Missionaries often asked why it was that Soka Gakkai was so successful. Some took it upon themselves to research the matter. My own research focused mainly on its propagation methodology and brought a number of reasons to light.[13] Relative to our concerns here—revelation and reason—findings were unequivocal.

1) *The importance of religion.* Though originally organized as a secular "study society," following the conversion of its founders, Soka Gakkai quickly adopted all the doctrines and ministrations of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. Fundamental to Nichirenism is the notion that "true Buddhism" is based on Buddha's final teaching in a holy book, the Lotus Sutra (Japanese, *Hokekyo*). As is the case with Eastern

holy books generally, the Lotus Sutra is not thought of as "revelation" in the sense that we think of the Bible as the revealed Word of God. Nor is its genuineness and truth demonstrated by historical and textual studies but rather by experiential evidence: repetition of the Sacred Title "Hail Glorious Sutra of conceivable kind." Nevertheless, it is revelatory, and therefore "true."

2) *A "contradiction" in Western philosophy.* The Soka Gakkai appeal to religious truth is accompanied by an appeal to philosophical validity. Makiguchi claimed to have discovered a contradiction in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Kant did not recognize that, in the triumvirate of truth, good and beauty, truth is objective and unchanging and not directly related to happiness. Good and beauty, on the other hand, are subjective and relative values and directly related to happiness. They can be "created" (Soka Gakkai means "Value-creation Society") and Makiguchi, Toda and their successors adduced all sorts of *reasons* designed to *prove* the validity of that claim. The fact that their argumentation would not be convincing to many logicians East or West is important but not decidedly so. What is germane here is the fact that it proved convincing to millions of Japanese in the 1950s and 60s.

Relevant Factors in the History of Protestantism in Japan

There is evidence that Christianity entered Japan very early, perhaps as early as the seventh century.[14] Protestant missions, churches and schools are relatively late, dating to the last half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, they share a history that literally bristles with lessons for contemporary missions generally and for evangelicals in particular. Already toward the end of the 19th century Protestantism in Japan was plagued by three related but distinguishable and important challenges: theological liberalism, social activism, and Japanese nationalism. Theological liberalism is most relevant to our present discussion, and it is ironic that it emanated from the nations that had sent a pure gospel and therefore constituted a special threat to orthodoxy when embraced by nationals. Congregationalist missionaries, for example, attempted to maintain control of one organization in order to ensure that "the money intrusted [*sic*] to its care be used for propagating the fundamental truths of the Gospel."[15]

1) *The Higher Critical approach to biblical studies from Germany.* Christian school of various kinds, but especially Christian universities, became hotbeds of Higher Criticism in the late 1880s and the 1890s. This was so especially after W. Spinner of the new German Evangelical mission opened a new school in Tokyo which promulgated the Higher Critical approach to Scripture. In Kyoto, though founded by the respected evangelical J. Niishima, Doshisha University succumbed to both this form of theological liberalism and to Shinto nationalism as well.

2) *Unitarianism and universalism.* About the same time toward the end of the 19th century, an American missionary, A. M. Knapp, joined the faculty of Keio University in Tokyo. He used his prestigious position as a launching pad to introduce Unitarianism and universalism to Japan.

Of course, this is but the tip of the iceberg. There is more—much more. The point is that the authority of Scripture was so undermined and sub-orthodoxy so prevalent in Protestant communions in Japan that they largely capitulated to the demands as the Shinto militarists assumed control in the first half of the twentieth century. The point is that the fortunes of evangelicals in Japan after World War II can only be understood in the light of both the defeat of the Japanese nation and the defection of the Japanese church. Defection of its Christian churches and schools meant that post-war Japan was largely—certainly not entirely—bereft of the kind of national leadership so sorely needed in those years of unprecedented opportunity. The defeat and occupation of the nation resulted in giving missionaries unprecedented freedom to preach the Gospel, which they did with great ardor. Among things that were lacking in that effort was a sufficient awareness of the liberalism that had long since undermined the authority of Sacred Scripture and the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith in Japan.

It is also important to understand that, while the gospel was being preached nationwide by national pastors and evangelists as well as foreign missionaries (and numerous pastors and evangelists visiting from abroad as well), that gospel was often obscured or even undermined by the sub-orthodox teaching/preaching of others. Japan not only had her own rather generous supply of liberal and neo-orthodox pastors and scholars, but was also visited by prominent theologians-

philosophers including Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Nels Ferre, and Charles Hartshorne among others. Confusion as to both the veracity and meaning of the gospel was often the result.

I have come to believe that the post-war evangelical effort in Japan did not suffer so much for lack of sincere proclamation of a "simple gospel" as for the relative dearth of a full-orbed gospel and solid reasons for believing it.

Missiology and Apologetics—
"Renewing our Vows"

It is not unusual these days for married couples to celebrate a wedding anniversary by renewing their vows. After my experiences in Japan and a half century of subsequent involvement in evangelical missions worldwide I suggest that evangelical apologists and missionaries "renew their vows." In the early centuries of the Christian era, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine and many other apologists were also missionaries. Missionaries such as Gregory the Illuminator, Ulfilas and Raymon Lull were also apologists. Currently, missionary efforts to evangelize the world stand in need of the contributions of evangelical theologians and philosophers. Of course, the converse is also true. Apologists and theologians stand to benefit from the contributions of evangelical anthropologists and cross-culturalists. But in this context I am most concerned about the former proposition.

The Role of Reason in Christian Discourse: Ronald H. Nash's Presuppositionalism
Ronald Nash speaks of a pervasive spirit of *misology* (i.e., the hatred of logic) in contemporary religious thought and the importance of confronting it.[16] If *misology* is a problem in theology and philosophy, rest assured that it is an even greater problem in *missiology* and missions. But to disparage reason is to diminish God. Buddhists in general have done that when they have made various types of paradoxes out to be prods to enlightenment. But, as we have seen, Soka Gakkai

Buddhists made converts when they resorted to cogency rather than *koans* in their propagation methodology. I believe that Nash is right and that, in one way or another, all cultures reflect the *imago Dei* in their cultural thinking. Reason is not antithetic to the truth of revelation but supportive of it because the God of creation is the author of both.

1) *Correspondence with reality as a test of truth is rooted in the divine nature.* Correspondence with the "really real" is not just an abstract principle, it is a reflection of the very nature of the Creator God who "cannot lie," (Titus 1:2), of the God for whom it is "impossible to lie" (Hebrews 6:19).

2) *Noncontradiction as a test of truth is rooted in the divine nature.* Similarly, the idea that A cannot be non-A in the same sense and at the same time is not just an abstract principle, it is a reflection of the Creator God who is "faith-full" and "cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

3) *Convergence of the Written Word and the Living Word as a test of truth.* Divine truth or "True Truth" can be stated propositionally, but it can never be propositional *only* because Christ the Son of God is Truth personified (Romans 3:4; John 14:6). The Written Word of God (Scripture) and the Living Word of God (Christ) testify to each other; are in accord with the "really real" and "true truth"; and together constitute the highest forms of God's revelation to humankind.[17]

Testing the Truth of Missiological Proposals: Harold Netland's Critique of Fideistic Subjectivism

Whether intended or not, and recognized as fideism or not, the elevation of subjective personal faith over the objective propositional faith "once for all delivered to the saints" is rampant in much of evangelical mission theory and practice. This is a subtle thing and sometimes only philosophically astute scholarship will recognize it and call it by its true name. As an example, I cite Harold A. Netland's criticism of Lesslie Newbigin's fideism. The well-published British churchman and missionary to India, Lesslie Newbigin, propounds a contextualized approach to postmodern culture in general and Hindu-Buddhistic peoples that has had wide appeal. He grounds his approach in the character of God and God's purposes and actions as put forth in Scripture. His larger contributions have earned the general approval of

evangelicals including the philosopher of religion, Harold A. Netland. But, while expressing appreciation for Newbigin's work, Netland points to a critical flaw in Newbigin's thinking that has escaped the notice of numerous students of mission.

Given his own view that there must be some criteria of truth that are not context-dependent or relative to worldviews, Netland finds it necessary to take issue with Newbigin's fideistic idea that ". . . there is no platform from which one can claim to have an 'objective' view which supercedes all the 'subjective' faith-commitments of the world's faiths . . . ."[18] Netland elaborates his objection by noting that the Zen Buddhist claims ultimacy for *satori,* the direct, unmediated apprehension of ultimate reality, and the Hindu appeals to *para vidya,* the allegedly self-certifying highest form of knowledge and truth. Then he goes on to say that if, as in Newbigin's view, a Christian does no more than claim priority for God's self-revelation in Jesus, then that Christian forfeits the right to reject other faiths as false and in the process opens himself/herself up to the charge of self-refutation. To put it in Netland's own words, "The mere thesis of fideism appeals to rationality norms, such as the principle of non-contradiction, which logically cannot be merely faith postulates."[19] The implications of this truth for missions and missiology are enormous.

Communicating a Complete Gospel: Norman L Geisler's "Essentials of the Christian Faith"

The Achilles' heel of much of contemporary evangelism at home and abroad is the popular appeal of a "simple gospel." Assent to a "simple gospel" is deemed sufficient for the salvation of the unsaved. Affirmation of a "simple gospel" is deemed adequate for fellowship and cooperation. Advocacy of a "simple gospel" is deemed to be all that is necessary for growing a church. Understood rightly, there is some truth to this. But it is also indicative of a serious anemia in evangelicalism worldwide. Happily, an effective antidote is provided by the philosopher and apologist, Norman L. Geisler. Geisler distinguishes faith essentials in a way that is at once uncomplicated and instructive. He differentiates soteriological, epistemological and hermeneutical fundamentals and then explains and supports them in his characteristically no-nonsense fashion.[20]

1) *Soteriological essentials and a critical distinction.* Geisler has compiled a list of fourteen doctrines that are necessary for salvation from the penalty of past sins (justification), the present power of sin (sanctification), and the presence of sin in the future (glorification).[21] However, he makes a clear distinction between those essential that *make salvation possible* and those that do not explicitly have to be believed in order for a person *to be saved.*

2) *The epistemological essential: an inspired and inerrant Bible.* Geisler also makes it clear that belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is not necessary for salvation. People were saved before there was a Bible. Neither is belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible a test of evangelical authenticity. Rather, it is a test of evangelical consistency. If the Bible is indeed the Word *of God* it follows that the autographs of the Bible were without error. Geisler quotes John Calvin to the effect that "Our faith in doctrine is not established until we have a perfect conviction that God is the author [of Scripture]."[22] These are epistemological issues that have to do with *how* we know what we know about God and his salvation.

3) *The hermeneutical essential: a literal, historical-grammatical interpretation of the biblical text.* Finally, Geisler holds literal, historical-grammatical interpretation to be a presupposition of this kind of entire discussion. Apart from it, Bible readers and teachers can make the Bible mean what they want it to mean. Apart from it, cultists twist the Bible so as to make it say what they want it to say. Apart from it, there is no orthodoxy. Apart from it, the Protestant principle *sola Scriptura* is of little or no account.

The Kind of Contextualization that is Critical to Church and Mission: Paul G. Hiebert's "Local Church as a Hermeneutical Community"

One of the most significant of the late Paul Hiebert's many contributions to theological/missiological thinking has to do with his notion of the local church and its

functioning as a hermeneutical community. His proposal was first published in *Missiology*,[23] but that article has been reprinted in several publications. It has three major components.

1) *The philosophy of "critical realism."* Hiebert first provides a well-reasoned approach to the relationship between signs and reality and between form and meaning apart from which contextualizations are almost certain to be either slavishly sterile or hopelessly subjective.[24]

2) *"Critical contextualization."* All contextualizations are not "equal." In the final analysis, it is interpretation, articulation and application of Scripture in the local cultural context that holds the greatest potential for being meaningful and effective.

3) *Contextualization as a function of the local church.* Hiebert proposes that missionaries and national pastors cooperate in ministering to both church and community by examining the beliefs and behaviors of local culture in light of the Word of God and then by assisting the congregation in the determination of Scripture-based verbal and behavioral forms applicable to the local culture.

Hiebert's idea of the church as a hermeneutical community has great merit, but it needs to be informed by John Leith's observation of the critical roles of the universal church and orthodox doctrine in Bible interpretation. A noncreedal, nontheological, nonhistorical Christianity has never endured even when it has been attempted. Both doctrinal and practical considerations need to be grounded not only in the text of Scripture but also in the text as interpreted by the Church Fathers and their successors and as displayed in the confessions of Early Church councils and subsequent deliberative bodies.[25]

Conclusion

Focusing on revelation and reason, and building on the post-war effort of evangelical missions in Japan, I have argued that evangelical missions would benefit from a more intentional and closer synergistic effort on the part of Christian mission theorists and practitioners on the one side and Christian philosophers and apologists on the other.

Excursus

The writer of Hebrews—whether the apostle Paul or, more likely, Barnabas or Apollos—was a well known intelligent man who possessed a mastery of the Greek language and a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament. He wrote to professing Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman world who were either tempted to revert to Judaism or to "Judaize" the gospel. He attempted to inform them concerning the true gospel and convince them to either remain or become Christians.[26] At least three aspects of the discipling or maturation process are involved.

1) *Revelation in Christ and Holy Scripture.* With his audience in mind, the writer of Hebrews makes use of the Septuagint translation. In so doing he makes it clear that he has complete confidence in the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God. Of course, the New Testament itself was still in process of being written and authenticated, but the author also has complete confidence that both the words he is writing and the Christ he is portraying are completely and uniquely revelations of the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Heb. 1:1-2).

2) *Elemental or core teachings of the Gospel.* The writer refers to such things as repentance from dead works, faith toward God, "washings" and so on as being the "*stoicheia* (elements, rudiments) of the *arche* (beginnings, origins) of the *logion* (oracles, revelations) of God" (Heb. 5:12). He says nothing to detract from these doctrines. They are essential. They are basic. It is absolutely necessary that they be understood and believed. But, that is not the end of the matter.

      3) *"Complete" doctrines for mature Christians.* Once the elementary teachings are understood and acted on, believers should go on to *teleiotes* (completeness, perfectness)—the doctrines that make for Christian maturity (Heb. 6:1-3). In the case of these particular Christians, these doctrines were of two types. First, they had to do with the Christian faith as it needs to be understood and believed—the "new covenant" in Christ, Christ as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek," Christ as Redeemer and Savior (chapters 7-10). Second, they had to do with faith as it is to be exercised and lived out—the faith of Abraham and a "cloud of witnesses," of Christ as Founder and Perfecter of the faith, of an unshakeable kingdom, and of brotherly kindness and Christian duties (chapters 11-13).

Notes

1. Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1960), 20-21. Quoted in John Leith, ed. *Creeds f the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday 1963), 1.
2. Of course, that evaluation cuts two ways. Japanese can be expected to think similarly of Westerners though they would be less likely to say so!
3. See, e.g., Kenneth L. Pike, "Emic and Etic Standpoints of the Description of Behavior," in Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior, part 1,* preliminary ed. (Glendale, CA.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1954), 8-28.
4. Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man* (New York: Whittlesey, 1949), 23.
5. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1956).
6. In part this may account for the tension between Charles Kraft's view of culture and that of Donald McGavran—a disagreement that underlies Donald A. McGavran's *The Clash Between Christianity and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Canon, 1972).
7. Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West," in Rudyard Kipling's *Verse: Inclusive Edition 1885-1918* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday 1924), 268-72.
8. See, e.g., the writings of S. L. Gulick, F. S. S. Northrop, and Hajime Nakamura.
9. See David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1991), 289-342, esp. 297-304.

10. See Edmund Perry, *The Gospel in Dispute* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), 99-106.

11. See diagram, "Three Basic Cognitive Approaches to Reality," in David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 303.

12. See Christopher R. Little, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized: An Evangelical Appraisal and Missiological Contribution to the Debate* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey). 2000. Concerning nature and natural revelation among the Japanese, see Hoyt Wayne Lovelace, "Toward a Contextualized Understanding of Conversion for the People of Japan: An Evaluation of the Effects of Worldview and Epistemology on Salvific Faith and Repentance," doctoral dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, December 2008.

13. See David J. Hesselgrave, ed. *Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements Around the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 132-35.

14. See John. M. L. Young, *By Foot to China* (Tokyo: Radiopress, 1984),19.

15. Charles W. Iglehart, *A Century of Protestant Christianiyin Japan* (Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles Tuttle, 1959), 96.

16. Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man: The Crisis of Revealed Truth in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 91ff.

17. See David J. Hesselgrave, "Reasoning Faith and Global Missions: On Reaching Hindus and Hindu-Like Peoples," in Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister, eds., *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 392.

18. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 190; quoted in Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 181.

19. Ibid., 182.

20. Norman L. Geisler, "The Essentials of the Christian Faith," in Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister, *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 99-100.

21. Ibid. 96-97.

22. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (London: James Clarke, 1953), 1.7.4. quoted in Geisler, ibid., 109.

23. Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization" *Missiology* 10 (July 1987): 287-96.

24. See Paul G. Hiebert, "Form and Meaning in the Contextualization of the Gospel" in Dean S. Gilliland, ed. *The Word Among Us* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 101-120.

25. John Leith, ed. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Co., Inc., 1963), 1-11 et passim.

26. See "Hebrew Introduction" in Kenneth L. Barker, gen. ed. *The Zondervan Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2006), 2050-51.