


2013

An Effort to Demythologize Missional Pedagogy in an Attempted Decolonizing of Biblical Studies With a View Toward a Constructive Alternative

Juan Dieter Doyle

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/ma_theses

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Doyle, Juan Dieter, "An Effort to Demythologize Missional Pedagogy in an Attempted Decolonizing of Biblical Studies With a View Toward a Constructive Alternative" (2013). *MA Theses*. Paper 23.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses at Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in MA Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. For more information, please contact akeck001@luthersem.edu.

AN EFFORT TO DEMYTHOLOGIZE MISSIONAL PEDAGOGY IN AN
ATTEMPTED DECOLONIZING OF BIBLICAL STUDIES WITH A VIEW TOWARD
A CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVE

by

J. DIETER DOYLE

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

THESIS ADVISER: DR MARY HESS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2013

This thesis may be duplicated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Two Key Questions	1
Defining Missional	2
Defining Missional Demythologization	3
Colonialism in the Wilderness.....	4
2. CONTEXT	6
Two Contexts: Word and World	6
Word: spectrum of word as context	6
World: spectrum of the world as context	7
3. REFLECTIVE DECONSTRUCTION	10
Emotional health and hearing the word of God.....	13
4. TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVE.....	20
F.F. Segovia: Pedagogical Discourses and Practices in Biblical Criticism.....	21
Historical Criticism	21
Literary Criticism	21
Cultural Criticism.....	22
Cultural Studies	23
Barth and a Christocentric Biblical Interpretation.....	24
Christian Smith and an Evangelical Reading of Scripture	28
Brueggemann and an Evangelical Infrastructure	29
Donald Juel, Imagination and Theological Interpretation.....	32
5. IN SEARCH OF A CURRICULUM.....	35
‘Curricular Dreams’	35
Posture: Pursuing a Post-Colonial Optic	35
Pedagogy: Pursuing a Post-Colonial Optic	39
Program: Pursuing a Post-Colonial Optic	45
Making the most of post-modern parallels with pre-modern communities ..	50
Biblical Hope and Theological Risk	58

6. AN UNANTICIPATED TURN.....	59
Demythologizing Missional Pedagogy and Unveiling Biblical Prophecy	59
Pedagogy and the Beast.....	60
Pedagogy and the Harlot	62
7. CONCLUSION.....	65
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	69

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NASB New American Standard Bible

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

Biblical Consciousness and Theological Sensibilities	50
Biblical Mentality and African Consciousness	52

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Two Key Questions

Two questions have provided both the background for this writing project, reflecting the climate or milieu from which the thesis statement has emanated, as well as motivating the research impetus.

What if the true famine emergency throughout Africa is the inappropriate and insufficient exercise of biblical studies that undergirds the proclamation of the gospel?

How then do bible teachers, if at all euro-centrally influenced, continue to step into that teaching chasm and interpretive gap, while at the same time creating as little white noise as possible?

If these two questions compose a sort of ground zero for this writing project, then the up-shot is the following thesis statement and design of this paper. The objective and intention of this paper represents AN EFFORT TO DEMYTHOLOGISE MISSIONAL PEDAGOGY IN AN ATTEMPT TO DECOLONISE BIBLICAL STUDIES WITH A VIEW TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVE.

A number of more general questions continually inform, couch, define and frame this pursuit. For example, are some readings of the bible more objective than others? More privileged? More true? How does one's own life situation shape one's reading of the text? How does the cross border teacher/critic facilitate movement from what could be called faithful reading to faithful obedience? How does the missionary teacher create a

safe learning space where the text can be engaged and God encountered, all the while avoiding textual assumption and interpretive imposition?

To follow this line of thinking the primary purpose of this paper is to explore a pedagogical exercise that is performatively shaped by the commitments of both missional praxis and learning theory with special consideration for the ‘colonial wound’ or post [colonial] traumatic stress disorder in Southern Africa. This is an attempt to frame the educational challenge of genuine biblical studies within the missional church of Southern Africa.

Defining Missional

Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission, within the history of God’s own world for the redemption of God’s creation.¹ In other words it is our commitment to share in God’s resolve for the healing and rescuing of everything. God’s mission, in the general sense of a long term purpose or goal is to be achieved through proximate objectives and planned actions. This is the context of missional pedagogy; it is a proximate objective within the accomplishment of God’s eschatological goal.

Such missional pedagogy is done with the hope of demonstrating contextual authenticity, indigenous credibility as well as upholding the biblical call for Christian intimacy while at the same time retaining theological astuteness, biblical fluency and

¹ Christopher J Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Downers Grove, IVP Academics, 2006

academic rigor, a kind of irreducible complexity. In other words, avoiding the temptation to sacrifice missional usefulness for academic sophistication or vice/versa.

Defining Missional Demythologization

An effective demythologizing of missional pedagogy and consequential decolonizing of biblical studies requires impartial and undisguised consideration engaging the following admissions and disclosures:

- Delusion of innocence

This is the deception that as individuals we are inculpable and guiltless with regard to the program of colonialism

- Fiction of non-complicity

This is a fabrication and work of imagination that as individuals we have not benefitted from, participated in and perpetuated the machinations of colonialism

- Illusion of objectivity

This is the hocus-pocus that as white missional teacher/critics we have engaged and communicated the bible impartially apart from our colonially inherited interpretive tool box.

- Mirage of accomplishment

This is the phenomenon of something being wanted so badly that it is seen or envisaged, apart from having substance or reality. What has actually been achieved in the colonial dispensation of mission? Is what is observed as the fruit of teaching mission real? Does it have substance?

This study takes the reality of empire – of imperialism and colonialism – as an omnipresent, inescapable and overwhelming reality in the world: the world of antiquity, the world of the Near East, or of the Mediterranean basin; the world of modernity, the world of Western hegemony and expansionism; and the world of today, of postmodernity, the world of post colonialism on the part of the two thirds world and of neocolonialism on the part of the west.²

Colonialism in the Wilderness

At the onset, so that there will be no fuzziness, blurriness, fudging, confusion or smoke screening, as to the origins of this all pervasive reality Willie James Jennings has this to say,

“At the third temptation, the devil parades his power, showing the nations already bound to his deception and under his power. The devil, the prince of this world, enacted a direct line to worldly power through himself. Now he presents to Jesus a straight shot and a short route to world victory. This is a temptation to powerful to pass up for almost any people. If given the chance, any people would want to rule the world and guide all other peoples in its own national vision of the true, the good and the beautiful. Any people could rationalize its purpose for world domination and leadership – for the sake of world safety, world peace, for the good of every people, we must lead.”³

² Fernando F Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 2000

³ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven (Conn.) Yale University Press, 2010 Full quote is:” at the third temptation the devil parades his power, showing the nations already bound to his deception and under his power. The devil, the prince of this world, enacted a direct line to worldly power through himself. Now, he presents to Jesus a straight shot and a short route to world victory.. This is a temptation to powerful to pass up for almost any people. If given the chance any people would want to rule the world and guide all other peoples in its own national vision of the true, the good and the beautiful. Any people could rationalize its purpose for world domination and leadership – for the sake of world safety, world peace, for the good of every people, we must lead. Every people wants to stand on the world stage ‘in splendor’, as a global player, and not be ignored, mistreated or disrespected. Jesus response is a flat denouncement of Satan’s power.”

The spirit of imperial colonialism is birthed in temptation and finally condemned, as will be observed later in this paper, by the book of Revelation.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXT

Two Contexts: Word and World

It is a matter of urgency to recognize that as teachers we are measured by and accountable for two contexts, both the *word* of God that constitutes the basis for all of the life and faith that we teach, and at the same time, we are measured by the *world* of God which gives shape and form to all of life and faith.

Word: spectrum of word as context

The Word as promise – security

*For as the rain and snow come down from Heaven,
And do not return there until they have watered the earth,
Making it bring forth and sprout,
Giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
It shall not return to me empty,
But it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
And succeed for the thing in which I send it. (Isaiah 55:10-11 NRSV)*

The Word as public¹ – scope

The mighty One God the Lord speaks and summons the earth

From the rising of the sun to its setting.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth

Our God comes and does not keep silence.

Before Him is a devouring fire,

And a mighty tempest all around Him. (PS 50:1-3 NRSV)

The Word as permanent – span

The grass withers, the flower fades;

But the word of our God will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8 NRSV)

These verses frame the context of the missional bible teacher as Servant of the Word!

This is the transcendent promissory, public and permanent nature of the word which we as pedagogues are called to work with. Could it be that the apparent failure of the word and the seeming contradiction of the promise may have to do in some small part with the irregular teaching of the word? In the context of this writing project could it not be valid to suggest that the promises of God are somehow falling between the cracks of pedagogy?

World: spectrum of the world as context

The particular regions of Mozambique referred to herein are very isolated, remote and rural areas and homesteads along the Zambezi River and within the Zambezi river delta on the east coast of Mozambique. The comments below pertain to my particular

¹ Oswald Bayer, Lecture notes, Public mystery, Spring 2012

knowledge and experience of one small part of Mozambique and cannot reflect trends and statistics more readily available for the country as a whole. These remarks are limited to and pertain especially to typical features and traits that have the most bearing on our work amongst the people of Delta region.

- The geo-political window

This region, historically, has had no resources whatsoever to attract the attention of politics or commerce of any sort in the form of offering infrastructure or employment.

- The socio-economic window

The delta is characterized by small extended family homesteads that make their living by subsistence farming and fishing.

- The socio-educational window

Until very recently the area known as Iluawe had absolutely no school or educational program whatsoever.

- The cultural window

This is an alarmingly patriarchal and polygamous society. There is an identifiable presence of African traditional religions and ancestral worship. A strong influence in the region is African Zionism. (A religious movement in Southern Africa represented by a group of independent churches which practice a form of Christianity incorporating elements of traditional African beliefs.)

- The missional teacher in context

Enter the suburban, white, over-privileged missionary, who has enjoyed the benefits of access to advantaged education and resources, and having been brought up in the racially charged era of apartheid South Africa now struggles with a false sense of

inherited birthright, entitlement, exemption and immunity. Though at the same time such a one senses an overwhelming responsibility, debt and obligation to both the gospel and those on the African continent who have at once been exploited, taken advantage of, totally ignored and continue to pay the price of arrogant colonialism.

This is the missional bible teacher as servant of the world!

It is the immersion in, commitment to and experience of the all-inclusive nature of the word of God (the all- together and entirely re-described reality); it is immersion in, commitment to and experience of the hidden, overlooked, ignored and forgotten people of Southern Africa; and it is immersion in, commitment to and experience of white supremacy that has provided the path of inquiry for this paper; in short it is the baffling and stymied experience of these contexts in conflict that has funded the investigative process of this writing project. It is this immersion and commitment that has prompted the following existential dismantling and personal deconstruction.

Chapter three now seeks to more particularly identify a complex of features and experiences that contribute to a 'colonial' myth of missional pedagogy.

CHAPTER THREE

REFLECTIVE DECONSTRUCTION

This chapter is an attempt to recognize, identify and name proclivity, proneness and propensity from within a personally privileged and euro-centrally influenced (my) missional pedagogical endeavor.

The intention is that this self-inspection, peer scrutiny and pedagogical analysis will bring to light both what is healthy as well as expose chinks in the armor of the missional pedagogue. This is in the hope that an exercise in deconstructive truth-telling will as an aftereffect provide a fitting framework, within which to begin to weave together all manner of seemingly unrelated personal, hermeneutical, pedagogical, contextual and curricular strands and threads into a valuable teaching tapestry that will serve the most isolated and remote contexts of Sub Saharan Africa.

The commentary to the ensuing diagnosis of indicators is brief in that this is first an exercise in recognition, and time will be better spent in a following chapter pursuing a prescription. This chapter serves only to name in a matter of fact way, without in depth analysis, the frustrations brought to Luther Seminary from out in the 'field'. These in turn set the trajectory of reading, research and recommendation in subsequent chapters.

What follows is best described as a kaleidoscope of recognizable ailments. Though these seem to be found in continually shifting patterns, they reappear in any number of configurations to varying extents in differing contexts, yet always composed

of the same basic symptoms. In some missional instances the full syndrome is manifest, while mostly, only parts of the syndrome are noticeable.

1. Biblical criticism, maintaining the power differential and protestant scholastic Christianity. .Fernando Segovia explores this meaningfully and will be discussed more fully in chapter four.

Higher criticism requires admittance to special knowledge mostly attained through higher education. This means money, literacy, language acquisition, schooling, opportunity to travel and more often than not separation from family and land. All of which are not considerations for a subsistence family. Enter the privileged and highly educated missional teacher/critic with all the special knowledge required to read the bible correctly. The rules for the power-play are automatically put in place.

2. The hermeneutical art of white privilege

I have recognized and begun to name these bents, inherited affections and impulses within myself as I have tried to serve the most overlooked, hidden, ignored and forgotten people in the hard places of Africa, so the pronoun ‘we’ is used.

- We are disposed to interpret scripture through the lens of ‘rights’ and not ‘gift’
- We are inclined to confuse ‘privilege’ with ‘blessing’
- We lean toward identifying with the good guys in the narrative
- We mostly model a theology of glory and triumphalism
- We favor and default to a hyper individualistic interpretation
- We gravitate toward an other-worldly, nebulous or philosophical (Greek) interpretation

- We mostly require access to extra biblical material (critical) to achieve interpretive certitude, feel adequately equipped and ensure a ‘proper’ teaching experience
- Application and implementation is apparently optional, urgency without immediacy. Biblical responsiveness and obedience is scheduled into our own agendas and on our own terms, as and when convenient
- Textual excusability. Forgiveness, freedom, healing, reconciliation and righteousness are almost exclusively the work of doctors, therapists, counselors and judges than identified with the ‘spirit’.
- We are prejudiced toward western notions of power and authority having been shaped by the ideals of the modern nation-state.
- Mission unlimited and participation restricted
- **Being the standard measure of all things, we are predisposed toward telling people what to think theologically rather than how to think theologically.**

This term refers to the teaching of a bible that unhesitatingly offers and invites Believers into unqualified participation in God’s limitless mission and yet ironically the modern teaching missionary models the opposite of this with an impressive educational history of required learning, financial support, and record of achievements¹

This is but one example of the many, even unconscious, competing interpretive paradigms that a missional teacher-critic ‘carries’ with him/her.

This ‘null’ curriculum has proven to be more broadly influential, more widely spread, more deeply absorbed, more enduring and generally more pervasive and all-

¹ A broad spectrum of authors as well as a surprising breadth of literature affirms that I am not alone in identifying these challenges, but many other authors have as well.

encompassing than any other intentional curriculum. One only has to think of the astonishing popularity of prosperity teaching, the stranglehold of money over the modern mission venture, unquestioned authoritative bible interpretation, the quest for western educational opportunities, hierarchical leadership and the erosion of relational authenticity. An exercise in owning and truth-telling with respect to this hidden curriculum is crucial if movement and labor toward a more constructive contextual alternative is to be tackled and committed to.

Emotional health and hearing the word of God

Spiritual giftedness and maturity does not imply automatic emotional health, well-being and maturity. Nor is the converse true. How one hears the word of God is filtered through layers of beliefs, values, emotional wellness, relational security and learnt behaviors. This proves to be powerful interpretive baggage, as in the case of King Saul who was influenced by those around him and did not destroy everything at the command of God. 1 Samuel 15: 22-23. See also the story of Peter and the sheet of unclean food from heaven. Prejudice makes for an immensely powerful interpretive perspective. God himself had to convince Peter that he should not call any man inferior. Acts 10: 28

Exegetical gymnastics and the control of biblical meaning. Much of bible doctrine is conveyed through inherited interpretive schemas which dictate meaning beyond the simple reading of a given text. For example John Darby's eschatological system and time line of final events was developed in response to the growing popularity of the social gospel. He 'lifted' relevant texts and thoughts from Ezekiel, Daniel, Matthew and Revelations, assembling them into an interpretive framework which most certainly cannot be concluded from a straightforward reading of the book of

revelation. This exegetical schema has been inherited by theologians as well as populists culminating in both debunked predictions of the end of the world and also the popular and hugely influential *Left Behind* series². This does not amount to legitimate canonical interpretation.

3. Doctrinal certitude

Much confusion ‘on the field’ is caused by historically successive or parallel teaching missions of differing theological persuasions advocating biblically birthed doctrines to the mutual exclusion of an apparently completely contradictory doctrine. As with all of these observations, the corrective (contention) to the practice of teaching isolated and seemingly competing doctrines outside of the whole biblical narrative will be addressed more fully in the following responsive chapters to this investigation.

4. Missionary paradigms in conflict. Hesselgrave notes ten missionary paradigms

which are of themselves in conflict with one another, He includes;

- “Sovereignty and Free Will, an impossible mix or a perfect match?
- Restrictivism and Inclusivism, is this mission trip really necessary?
- Common Ground or Enemy Territory, how should we approach adherents of other faiths?
- Holism and Prioritism, for whom is the gospel good news?
- Incarnationalism and Representationalism, who is our missionary model – Jesus or Paul?
- Power encounter and Truth Encounter, what is essential in spiritual warfare?

² Tim LaHaye and Jerry B Jenkins, *Left Behind: a Novel of the Earth’s Last Days*, Wheaton, Tyndale House Publishers, 1995.

- Amateurization or Professionalization, a call for missionaries or a divine calling?
- Form and Meaning, how does scripture inform ‘contextualization’?
- Countdowns and prophetic alerts, if we go in force will He come in haste?
- The Kingdom of God and the church of Christ, what on earth is God building here and now”?³

Considering the conflictual nature and potential of these starting points, it is little wonder that so much of the fruit of colonial era missions is characterized by groups of believers with sometimes startlingly vigorous opposing views.

5. The biblical Cyclops and single vision

This point is directly related to the previous five observations. Palmer (though in a different context) alerts one to the human propensity for living one-eyed lives and using single vision to form our image of reality. He says that to make use of either of two eyes alone is not sufficient. One needs to develop ‘wholesight’. To partially quote his reference to Robert Frost, “But yield who will to their separation, my object in living is to unite.”⁴ For Palmer it is clear that by wholesight he means using the “eyes of the mind and the eyes of the heart.”⁵ This paper is borrowing his words but reconstruing there meaning so as to look at things with theological wholesightedness. This is a reference to a “both-and” theological perspective rather than an “either-or” theological single vision.⁶

³ David J Hesselgrave *Missionary Paradigms in Conflict*, Paradigms in conflict: 10 Key Questions in missions today. Grand Rapids MI, Kregal Publications, 2005

⁴ Parker J Palmer. *To Know As We Are Known, A Spirituality of Education*. San Francisco, Harper, 1983

⁵ Parker J Palmer. *To Know As We Are Known, A Spirituality of Education*. San Francisco, Harper, 1983

⁶ Roger Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*. Downers grove, Inter Varsity Press, 2002

Again, it is important to note that these observations will be responded to and addressed in chapter 4.

6. Philosophical theological frameworks and the biblical mentality, R.P. Carroll convincingly shows how western theological philosophical frameworks are incompatible with the biblical mentality and are insufficient conveyors of biblical thought/metaphor.⁷
7. Theological pedagogy and Christian Intimacy. Willie James Jennings elucidates with remarkable clarity how Christianity operates within a diseased social imagination.⁸ Theological discourse has been severed from the practice of Christian intimacy. This is not surprising given the potential for theological conflict.

At this point one is alarmed by the competing models of discourse in biblical criticism, hermeneutical frameworks, exegetical schematics, doctrinal certitudes, missional paradigms and theological systems.

⁷ Robert P Carroll, *Wolf in the sheepfold. The bible as problematic for theology*. London, SCM Press, 1997, The tension between biblical metaphor and a system of religious belief is a very good illustration of what makes the bible problematic for theology. Biblical language harnessed to the dogmatic constructions of Greek inspired philosophical theology helped to produce some of the elements of early Christian beliefs. But biblical metaphors were taken over and translated into Hellenistic thought patterns, so that they were freighted with alien concepts. Hebrew imagery survived but in Greek dress and transformed by the hermeneutics of the Septuagint translators and the later theologians who were steeped in Greek philosophy.

⁸ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian imagination: theology and the origins of race*. New Haven (Conn), Yale University Press, 2010. He says, "I argue here that Christianity in the western world lives and moves within a diseased social imagination. I think most Christians sense that something about Christians social imagination is ill. But the analyses of this condition often don't get to the heart of the constellation of generative forces that have rendered peoples social performance of the Christian life collectively anemic. Those shortsighted analyses suffer on the one side from unfamiliarity with the deep theological architecture that patterned early modern visions of people, places and societies and therefore lack the sense of what was turned horribly wrong theologically. And on the other side Christian Theology now operates inside this diseased social imagination without the ability to discern how its intellectual and pedagogical performance reflect and fuel the problem of further equipping the communities it serves. That is theology lacks the ability to see the profound connections between an embrace by very different people in the chapel and theological meditation articulated in the classroom,

Also alarming, is that it becomes very clear how euro-centrally influenced and colonially shaped the discipline of biblical studies is, especially considering that most of the leaders in ‘world Christianity’ and global mission are North American while the majority of believers live in the global south.

The question raised now is, how do missional teachers navigate this complexity in an effort to engage in authentically contextual biblical studies that undergird the gospel, and not simply default to the gospel proclamation so prevalent across much of sub Saharan Africa that is succinctly described as the mile-wide inch-deep syndrome?

Furthermore, a number of general impressions, perceptions and observations only lend weight to the case for the necessity to begin to re-construe what is a curricular urgency in remote sub Saharan Africa. These comprise and present both challenges and opportunities to the missional teacher/critic. Some of these observations may include the following;⁹

- In Africa nothing of significance happens outside of the constraints of relationship
- The need to reproduce the biblical mentality and not just imitate the observable church organizationally
- Many African church leaders in remote places do not even believe they are meant to interpret scripture for themselves, and consequentially do not trust themselves to be able to draw ‘correct?’ meaning from reading the bible
- The faith of the pastor is the faith of the people. This means that only what the pastor knows the people know, that what the pastor believes the people believe,

⁹ The following authors are a reflection of those who agree with me on these assertions. Robert J. Houle. *Making African Christianity, African Re-Imagining their Faith in Colonial A Southern Africa*, Bethlehem PA,: Leigh University Press, 2011

that what the pastor models the people do and to a large extent what the pastor experiences the people seek to experience.

- The omni-present need to restore faith in the bible and rebuild trust in God after the colonial deception.
- The affinity of the biblical consciousness and an African worldview
- Postmodern parallels with African culture
- An over evangelized and under taught sub-continent
- Translations and illiteracy
- The prosperity teaching
- Mission associated with money (fury over fees, Nigeria)

In the light or shadow as it were of this more general and reflective exercise in missional deconstruction three critical, cutting and demanding areas of concern and consideration have been unceremonially churned to the surface. These must be pinpointed, tagged and tasked with the responsibility of governing and superintending the pursuit of a more constructive alternative. They are:

- Missional Posture, (way of being present, bearing, disposition, inscape and self-awareness)
- Pedagogical Methodology, (way of design, practice and technique)
- Curricular Content, (way of composing subject matter, and thought)

The sincere Christian trans-border bible interpreter/teacher/critic is left wondering how to extend the kingdom of God without expanding the empire of a kind of man (mankind)?

Close attention must now be paid to the formative influences of posture, methodology and content, as they have been determined out of this investigation.

If biblical studies are to be decolonized then it is necessary to develop an all-inclusive post-colonial optic with respect to missional posture, methodology and discourse as well as curricular content.

The following chapter will begin an attempt to address this conundrum.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVE

Having made some general observations this chapter first, in conversation with FF Segovia, as an example, hones in on the inadequacies of pedagogical discourse and practices in historical, literary, and cultural criticism (considering my particular context as a missionary bible reader/teacher/critic in remote places of Africa), as well as asks the question whether cultural studies is an altogether fruitful step toward a contextual biblical pedagogy.

Then informed by Barth, Smith, Brueggemann and Juel this chapter begins to pull together insights around inner biblical interpretation that may be key considerations, to keep close at hand, around which a useful and fertile curricular proposal may be constructed. This proposal could constitute the technical center of research and reading, as it were, in direct response to a demythologizing of my own missional pedagogy and a deconstruction of personal experience revealing and naming some of the frustrations born on the ‘field’ and carried to Luther seminary in the hope of finding some kind of settlement.

This first section, because of the vastness of the discipline, will be restricted to identifying common problematic themes reoccurring in ‘pedagogical discourse and practices in Contemporary biblical criticism’. This exploration will further enhance and refine the process of diagnoses and prescription.

Also, all these scholars have been fairly extensively quoted and included in the body of this chapter, so as to act as ongoing conversation partners, correctors and instructors with the previous demythologization and deconstruction, as well as to begin to support a bridge spanning to possible greener curricular pastures in the following chapter.

F.F. Segovia: Pedagogical Discourses and Practices in Biblical Criticism

Historical Criticism

First, the model involved learned impartation and passive reception. In keeping with its corresponding demand for a universal and informed reader-construct, the model argued that the proper dissemination and acquisition of the right methodological tools could turn student/readers, regardless of sociocultural moorings or theological persuasion, into informed and universal teacher/critics. Second, given such emphasis on learned impartation, the model was at heart highly pyramidal and authoritative, quintessentially patriarchal with competing claims to honor advanced in terms of academic genealogy (who begat whom: where one studied and with whom) and critical sociolect (proper vs. improper approximations to the text). Third, quite in keeping with the universal and informed reader –construct, the model further entailed a process of dehumanization as a key component in its right of initiation for all would-be practitioners and devotees. Student/readers would become teacher/critics by learning how not to read themselves as readers, except for the purpose of surfacing theological presuppositions....¹

Literary Criticism

First, the model again involved sophisticated impartation and passive acquisition. Given its call at first for a universal and informed reader-construct and later for a more specific and formal reader-construct, the model took it for granted that all student/readers, regardless of sociocultural moorings or theological persuasion, could become teacher/critics, provided that the right theoretical and methodological apparatuses were properly propagated and learned. Second, given the continued emphasis on sophisticated impartation, the model retained at heart highly pyramidal and authoritative, typically patriarchal, with competing claims to honor now offered in terms of literary sociolect (which particular critical stance to follow) and external authority (which critics to read). Third, regardless of the

¹ FF Segovia. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies, A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2000

reader-construct at work, whether that of the universal and informed reader or that of the specific and formal reader, the model continued to abstain, in its rite of initiation for all would-be practitioners and devotees, from any reading of real readers. The model clearly clung thereby to the ideal of dehumanization: real student/readers would become teacher/critics by learning how not to read themselves...²

Cultural Criticism

First, as in the previous critical disciplines, the model involved learned impartation and passive reception. Second, again, this model is highly pyramidal and authoritative, patriarchal to the core and claims to honor are advanced in terms of which disciplines to follow and which writers to read. Third, it also abstained from any reading of real readers, or called for a circumscribed reading of real readers in terms of social class. Dehumanization still prevails, though student/readers would have to learn to read themselves only according to the categories of oppressors and oppressed.

Two alarming insights are ascertained from the aforementioned criticism of criticism's pedagogical discourse.

First, easily recognizable is the *banking* system of education, as articulated and demonstrated by Paulo Freire in pedagogy of the oppressed³ as well as the notion of 'gospel (knowledge) commodification.

Second, is the persistent keynote of a necessary *dehumanization* that accordingly accompanies this pedagogical discourse and practice in biblical criticism?

It would not be amiss to conclude then, that for missional pedagogy to be affiliated with such dehumanizing critical practices, would be self-defeating from the

² FF Segovia. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies, A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2000

³ Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: Trans Myra Bergman. NY Herder and herder, 1970

beginning, particularly as it is associated with a curricular effort at underscoring a post-colonial posture, methodology and content or, in other words, advancing a post-colonial optic.

Cultural Studies

- The primary contribution of cultural studies is that it recognizes recognizing diversity in ways of being and ways of reading

The following paragraph is a brief compilation of the benefits of cultural studies as Segovia sees them. Cultural studies is a stride in the ongoing struggles of liberation and decolonization in the discipline of biblical studies from recognizing enormous diversity in the realm of theory and methodology

“to acknowledging an enormous diversity in the sociocultural realm. This development posits a different construct: the positioned, always situated and interested, flesh and blood reader.

This approach ‘takes diversity to heart’, and makes room for the immense scope of diversity in texts, readings and readers. It also recognizes and reckons with the ‘reality of empire, imperialism and colonialism as an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming reality in the world’⁴.

What is missionally appropriate and provocative, is that Segovia suggests; First, there can no longer be a demand for a common methodological approach on the part of all readers; second, informed readings can no longer be seen as hermeneutically privileged and inherently superior; third, readers can no longer be expected to put aside their ‘faces’ and their voices as a necessary prerequisite to becoming informed.

However, for those reflective practitioners of cultural studies it is important to recognize that *meaning* is not located in the *author* of the text, nor *behind* the text or *within* the text but within the reader.

⁴ FF Segovia. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2000

It is at this point that the missional bible interpreter must say thank you, and armed with these additional insights move beyond the contributions of cultural studies. Seeing that meaning no longer resides or hides with the author, history, text nor reader of the text (as posited by cultural studies) where then do we turn to find the mystery of the location of meaning?

It is burning to note, and to be cautioned again later, that any “proposed post-colonial optic in biblical studies and curricular development demands *a pedagogical vision to go hand in hand with its interpretive vision*”!⁵

This must be asserted now at the juncture between Segovia’s observations of the pedagogical shortcomings of the discourse of critical methodologies and the following reconnaissance of interpretive paradigms.

Karl Barth, Christian Smith, Walter Brueggemann and Donald Juel will each in turn unfold this inquiry and serve to inform, govern and guide this exploration. The intention is to make use of the insight gained from each author to both undergird and build on the next (to form a sort of *interpretive scaffolding*), with a view toward an emerging post-colonial pedagogical construct?

Barth and a Christocentric Biblical Interpretation

- Allegory and typology (types and antitypes)

Allegory allows for an interpretive breadth that Barth does not find in typological interpretation. The question then is what is the unseen center, the hidden subject matter and the concealed referent at stake in bible passages whose surface content obviously has

⁵ FF Segovia *Decolonizing Biblical studies: A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2000

nothing to do with Christ? Barth encourages thinking about the stories of Joseph, Moses, David or Job. All of these characters being imperfect, with twists in life-plots and sometimes ambiguous outcomes are subject to a typological reading and each somehow finds its ultimate reference in Christ – its deepening, correction or healing. Barth notes that each of these figures was a pointer or type that was somehow reconfigured, restored and surpassed in Christ. Their ultimate significance could only emerge when the type was juxtaposed to Christ as the *antitype*. “This interpretation required a reading that took place on two different levels at the same time: the one straightforward and the other Christological. This was to ensure that the type was not simply overpowered by the antitype”

- Affirmation/negation and negation of the negation (incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection)

In various ways each of the afore-mentioned example displays elements of the same underlying pattern (usually partially) of ‘affirmation’, ‘negation’ and ‘negation of the negation’. In other words incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection! With this process in mind think of Joseph in the pit, then in the Pharaoh’s prison or later in Pharaoh’s court as provider. The same pattern can be easily observed, at least partially, in David, Moses or Job.

‘Corollaries to this procedure’, Karl Barth’s three hermeneutical moves

- Judgment and grace

This cross/resurrection sequence or the transition from ‘negation’ to ‘negation of the negation’ was construed as the template secretly governing all biblical instances of judgment or grace. These instances had to be viewed ‘stereoscopically’. Meaning they

had to be read straightforwardly just as they stood, *according to their manifest content*, and yet also in the light of their *latent content* as covert witnesses to Christ, their ultimate center and subject. When the latent content was inserted beside the manifest content, as in a stereoscope, a new hermeneutical perspective was opened up... from a two dimensional to a three dimensional image. Each image was valid in its own way.

- Sinful and justified

His second hermeneutical move involved the idea of *simul iustus et peccator*. This is Luther's concept of the justified sinner, as developed by Barth. To quote again,

” Just as all other instances of divine judgment and grace were embraced, limited and reconstituted by Christ's death and resurrection, so too, in another way were 'sinful' and 'justified' reconfigurations of that same death and resurrection as their 'hidden' center. The believing sinner was someone who had been condemned in Christ's death and justified by His resurrection. Significantly, this view of the believers status generated a Christ centered hermeneutic with more nearly anthropological implications. That is, despite being sinful in our selves, being made totally righteous in and through union and communion with Christ, which gives true and final identity, in spite of all that might seem to count against it”. This was for Luther the center of the reformation revelation; See for example Peter the blasphemer or David the murderer.⁶

- Dialectical hermeneutic of inclusion

His last hermeneutical move pertained to texts that seemed to be contradictory. He examined blocks of material, for example the conditional and unconditional biblical covenants, each of which appeared to involve two irreconcilable trains of thought. Barth terrifically suggests that both are to be accepted as valid: He says, “One of them is always true in experience and thought, and we must always believe in the other that we do not see”. This was a hermeneutic of dialectical inclusion.” It meant moving back and forth

⁶ Robert McAfee Brown “et al” *Thy Word is Truth: Barth on Scripture*. Ed George Hunsinger. Grand Rapids, William b Eerdmans, 2012

without *synthesis* between the two trains of thought on the supposition that the two were compatible, without being able to show how”.⁷

*Mysticism keeps men sane... the ordinary man has always been sane because the ordinary man has always been a mystic... if he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and the contradiction along with them. His spiritual sight is stereoscopic, like his physical sight: he sees two different pictures at once and yet sees all the better for that.*⁸
—G K Chesterton

Matthew Levering summarizes Catherine of Sienna and Francis de Sales saying that “every attempt to resolve the question in favor of one affirmation or the other exceeds the bounds of proper theological reflection. The question must be left unresolved... To leave the question unresolved does not mean taking no position. On the contrary, it means as strongly as possible to affirm two realities...”⁹

Barth wants to move the teacher/reader toward a post critical ‘second’ naïveté’. He wants the biblical word to be heard without interference but in a sophisticated way perfectly aware that there is such a thing as criticism. Barth’s contribution and challenge is to be a *direct reader* of the subject matter or object of reflection, to read the text ‘genuinely religiously’. For Barth the subject matter is the text, to be engaged not as an uncritically naïve reader but as a post-critical and aware, a naïve reader.

⁷ Robert McAfee Brown “et al” *Thy Word is Truth: Barth on Scripture*. ed George Hunsinger. Grand rapids, William B Eerdmans, 2012

⁸ GK Chesterton as quoted by Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths*. NY, Oxford university press, 2011

⁹ Matthew levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths*. NY, Oxford university press, 2011

Christian Smith and an Evangelical Reading of Scripture

Different ways of doing by saying speech/act theory and perlocution

- Breaking from modern epistemology
- Not starting with a theory of inspiration
- Understanding different ways of doing by saying
- The many dimensions of biblical authority
- Historically growing grasp of the meaning of the gospel

In summary, a corollary to this understanding is that, as Christian Smith points out, an evangelical reading of the bible then demands of the reader to learn to live with scriptural ambiguities, drop the compulsion to harmonize, distinguish dogma, doctrine and opinion, recognize that not everything must be replicated and in humility live on a need to know basis¹⁰

Smith's emphasis on doing by saying, Bayer's emphasis on speech/act theory and Luther's insight of the effectual word of God are all critical reminders the scriptures that missional pedagogues teach cannot simply be reduced to a banking system of knowledge commodification and transfer across the power differential, but in their simple articulation they are effective, creative and accomplish things. God sends words, whether by teaching or preaching.

The question to be asked now is, how a Christo-centric hermeneutical key and an evangelical reading of the bible can be translated into life and faith, or as Brueggemann calls it, an evangelical infrastructure. Or, what kind of interpretive reading framework

¹⁰ Christian Smith. *The Bible Made Impossible : Why Biblicalism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Brazos, 2012

may best serve to translate the bible into life and faith? This is a critical contingency. If gospel proclamation and liberated pedagogy does not have as an outcome liberative transformation, then as missional teachers it is necessary to concede at least a measure of bankruptcy and deficiency. This is what the African continent epitomizes so well. Gospel transformation (personal or social) is too often aborted by pedagogical neglect and indifference. Far too often the missional teacher/critic in Africa has left a legacy not of disciples, but of delinquents.

Brueggemann and an Evangelical Infrastructure

Brueggemann persuasively outlines what he calls an evangelical infrastructure that ought to guide, shape, inform, fund and provide a framework for a better translation/imaginary of the bible into life than the commitments of Biblicism, the practices of criticism as well as cultural studies.

Defining an evangelical infrastructure

- Evangelical

“‘Evangelical’ is used in its proper sense as an adjectival form of ‘gospel’. It is a mode of life and discourse that lives in deep tension with every faith option that does not mediate active rescue from our common ‘deathliness’”.¹¹

- Infrastructure

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann. *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*. Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

Infrastructure, Brueggemann says, “refers to a system or network of signs and gestures that make social relationships possible. An evangelical infrastructure is one that mediates and operates in ways that heal, redeem and transform”.¹²

An evangelical infrastructure is in large sweep ordered into past/present/future, that is, with a life *created* by God and *consummated* by God. This is a powerful counter-world resisting the dominant cultural and social imagination. “Creation faith, he says, as understood in the bible, seeks to explain nothing. Creation faith is a doxological wonder that I/we/the world exist. It is an assertion that all exists by the extravagant generosity of God and is reluctant to give reasons for Gods intention. It is enough to acknowledge, be awed and delighted.”¹³

Corollaries of this framework are the origin and finished self, world and church.

- The origin of self and the finished self, *a defeated self and a new self*

“This asserts that the human self, each precious one, myself and all my neighbors, are a product of Gods majesty, power and generosity.”¹⁴

In his words again, in spite of this assertion, all people know about the restless dissatisfaction with self.

- The origin of the world and the finished world, *a defeated world and a new world*

“The news of the gospel concerning the world is that God has ordered the world as a life giving, joy producing system of generativity.

¹² Walter Brueggemann. *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993

¹³ Walter Brueggemann. *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post -modern Imagination*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993

¹⁴ Walter Brueggemann. *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*. Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

Though the world as we know it is not the one called ‘good’, not the one God intended. Creation is in deep futility.”¹⁵

- The origin of community and the finished church, *a defeated church and a new community of faith*

“Israel is a gift of God’s originating mercy. Israel itself is enough of an incalculable mystery and in turn invites evangelical reflection on the church.

The church, broken, anticipates a people fully turned to God. This refers to a slice of humanity that participates in God’s resolve for a new world.”¹⁶

Humanity fights the power of sin on its own, it lives where hope has not been and stumbles around in a world of merciless darkness.

The redeemed self, world and church live in both defeat and victory.

An evangelical infrastructure imagines a self that is satisfied in every way by God.

An evangelical infrastructure imagines a world that is no longer a closed arena of limited resources and fixed patterns of domination, no longer caught in endless destructive power struggles.

An evangelical infrastructure imagines a community of faith no longer in exile.

Altogether then, this evangelical infrastructure places the self, world and church between wondrous origin and full restitution. An evangelical infrastructure imagines a self, a world and a church no longer having to endure the apparent contradiction of the

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*. Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

¹⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination* Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

promise. The scope of this evangelical infrastructure cues the church to remember a rich past, to live in a covenantal present and to hope a marvelous future.¹⁷

This evangelical infrastructure seems to provide a reasonable and fitting framework in which to think about the interpretive movement from ‘faithful reading’ to faithful living (obedience).

This reading of Barth, Smith and Brueggemann suggests then that meaning could conceivably be unlocked with a Christocentric hermeneutical key (Barth), unveiled with the courage of a truly evangelical reading of the bible (Smith), and finally then is realized by living within a ‘gospelled’ or evangelical infrastructure (Brueggemann).

The fruit of this exercise in deconstruction and responsive reconstruction is that this imaginably may be how Bible Study begins to be decolonized, Missional Pedagogy begins to be debiblicized and readers begin to be Rehumanized?

This may be as good a place as ever to interject a word about imagination and theological interpretation from Donald Juel;

Donald Juel, Imagination and Theological Interpretation

Matthew Skinner says the following with respect to Juel’s reading and teaching of the bible:

“When the bible confronts us with stories and images of God that show our conceptions of the world and the divine to be too small or too self-centered we can resist those words or allow them to expand our imaginations. Juel did not read scripture so that he ‘could get everything right’ or construct a secure, foolproof theology capable of answering all the questions scripture raises; he read so that he and those he taught could develop richer imaginations about God – greater hopes about and greater commitments to what God can make possible. The words of scripture cannot establish facts about God and the gospel. If they could they

¹⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*. Minneapolis, fortress press, 1993

would render faith unnecessary. But those words can mediate promises that confront us now, driving us toward God...For Juel the elusive character of the narrative results in an important theological consequence. It leaves us who interpret the bible left to choose between two options. We might pretend we can make every detail fall into line, bending jigsaw puzzle pieces until they all submit to our makeshift portraits. (Following Kermode, Juel lamented ‘the cunning and violence’ that interpreters inflict upon biblical texts to make them behave in a more orderly fashion.) Or we might acknowledge that part of doing theology and living a life of faith is to live in the light of promise that are never fully explained—only made”. 18

At the end of all things the question remains, and is an ever present challenge, if not defiance, to white missionaries in Africa, does being ‘decolonized’ mean being ‘de-raced? What is the relationship between the two? Is this necessary...or even possible?

In conclusion, this chapter serves to place in the foreground, just as a reminder of, how malignly innovative, perniciously resistant and doggedly relentless the colonial mindset is. A current example of how well-meaning pastor/missionary/teachers continue to perpetuate a missional colonial-expansionism. To do this, consider reformed theology and the new colonialism.

Many times by finding outlets for ‘literature’ and books in Africa, on the basis of bible study guides and theology (which may be appropriate in the global north), the church, astonishingly, has managed to both depersonalize as well as perpetuate colonial missional teaching . Authors of books written with an enlightenment influence, by white patriarchs in comparative luxury, thinking what Smith calls “‘Gore-Tex’ theological thoughts”¹⁹ (a comfortable theology of creation away from the bugs of reality), for

¹⁸ Donald H Juel, *Shaping the Scriptural Imagination : Truth, Meaning and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. eds. Shane Berg and Matthew Skinner, Waco Tex, Baylor University press, 2011

¹⁹ Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of the Bible*, Grand rapids, Brazos, 2012

instance, no longer even need to set foot in Africa to pass along their interpretive perspective. The aftermath of this is anonymous culpability.

Thus far, having begun to envisage the interplay/coaction of what a pedagogical vision hand in hand with an interpretive vision may have to take under advisement, the following chapter will set about building a curricular scaffold making use of these insights.

CHAPTER FIVE
IN SEARCH OF A CURRICULUM

‘Curricular Dreams’

Having recognized and named some of the problematics pertaining to pedagogical posture, practice and curricular content it is now germane to begin to ask questions in the line of what then constitutes a constructive alternative? What should it look like? What is the matrix of considerations that ought to fund such a project? It could perhaps be best to begin this process of prescription (because it is an illness) by recognizing and acknowledging some sensitivities that may be instrumental when composing a curriculum functioning with an intentional post-colonial optic.

A constellation of sensitivities turning on posture, methodology and content ought to inform this course of action:

Some considerations to take into account when exploring missional byways and taking the scenic interpretive trail may be as follows; also, more attention is given to some of the scenic overviews than others.

Posture: Pursuing a Post-Colonial Optic

- Solidarity, embodied pedagogy and the new colonialism

Missional solidarity cannot be prescribed. If anything it must point toward sameness and oneness in resistance to everything evil and emancipation from all things oppressive. ‘The project of resistance and emancipation ... should be seen not as uniform

and harmonious but as multifaceted and conflictive, given the varied nature of domination and oppression.’¹ This witness must be prepared for resistance of anything destructive, disempowering and un-dignifying along the spectrum from personal demonic possession to toothache and institutionalized violence and systemic evil.

This paper will re-contextualize the conversation of ‘embodied and disembodied’ pedagogies into an African missional context. For one thing remember how many missionally minded western author-teachers are finding creative ways to import their doctrinally slanted books into remote places in Africa thereby missioning and teaching without ever presenting themselves bodily. This is not unlike Dr. Hess’s insights with regard to the relationship between digital media and pedagogy. The parallel goes even further, as she says, “I believe that white theological educators in the Christian tradition (and mission), if we are to be fully authentic and responsive to the Christian faith we espouse must be at the leading edge of creating a ‘border community,’ of seeking a translation that allows us to affirm the call we feel, the gospel we believe in, by deconstructing white supremacy, by constantly, continually and consistently critiquing our practices, assumptions and languages.”²

The question Professor Hess raises is most pertinent to a white missionary-teacher (enlightenment influenced) amongst black people (pre-modern) serving in a post-colonial (though racially differentiated) context, ‘How am I to value the knowledge communities from which I have come while still gaining fluency in those to which I’m drawn?’

¹ Fernando F Segovia. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View From The Margins*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2000

² Mary Hess. *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All that we can’t leave Behind*, NY Rowman and Littlefield, 2005

- Teaching as sacrament (Theology as liturgy and sacrament)

Mary Elizabeth Moore...says, "To say that teaching is sacramental is not to add to the number of formal sacraments but to emphasize the role of education in mediating God. The definition of sacrament has expanded to mean *the conveyance of God's grace through signs in creation for the sanctification of human beings and the well-being of all God's creation*. So sacramental teaching in turn is *mediating the grace of God through the concrete stuff of creation for the sanctification of human communities and the well-being of all God's creation*."³

It will be of transformative consequence if the missionary teacher-critics become conscious of themselves as not just transferring knowledge across the power differential but communicating God across the knowledge divide. The need in post scholastic and academic missional pedagogy is for sacramental teaching that *mediates God in the church and the world*. Therefore the primary act of sacramental teaching is as Moore again says, "*to expect that God is present and will act*."⁴

- Developing a general post-colonial posture in missional pedagogy (Philippians 2:5-11)

Philippians 2:5-8 deals with Christ's voluntary humiliation and submission. This hymn refers to two distinct actions on Christ's part: the action of the pre-existent Christ in emptying himself and becoming a man and the action of the human Jesus in being obedient even to death. Christ deliberately emptied himself. The two major interpretative

³Mary Elizabeth Moore. *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*. Cleveland, Pilgrim press, 2004

⁴ Mary Elizabeth Moore: *Teaching As a Sacramental Act*. Cleveland, Pilgrim press, 2004m

applications of this text both add to its missional meaning: Firstly,” the Philippians are urged by Paul to have in themselves the disposition that Christ showed, and secondly, Paul’s command could mean ‘show among yourselves the attitude that arises from the fact that you are in Christ.’”⁵

Mission in general and trans-border biblical interpreter/teachers in particular, serving in a post-colonial context must more than ever pay careful attention to the commands of this Christological hymn. Humiliation, vulnerability and risk must run deep, not only as it pertains to service, but must also extend to embrace the missionary teachers knowledge base.

A further telling provocation of this text is the willingness of God the Father to expose Jesus to misinterpretation. As God the Father is willing to risk the misinterpretation of Jesus as the word made flesh by the people, so too, it is necessary for missionary teachers to be willing to risk the misinterpretation of the written word by the people. This provides a pedagogical point to ponder a little further in this paper.

- Intentional strategic positioning in missional pedagogy (John the Baptizer)

For the context of first world scholars (teaching in the global South), Mary Ann Tolbert says, several aspects of this narrative portrait are valuable. “First, John the Baptist does not simply disappear from the narrative when Jesus appears, he continues to witness to what ‘he has seen.’” He stays on board so to speak. He does not remain quiet or just walk away representing a disengagement which is an indicator of privilege and a luxury of the powerful. Tolbert says that “those who can choose to leave the table are

⁵ Morna D Hooker “The Letter to the Philippians” *in the New Interpreters Bible, volume 11.* (Nashville, Abingdon press, 2000)

those secure in their own power, knowing that the conversation that happens after leaving will not affect them”. Second, in the narrative John seeks further information about what Jesus is up to and his activities. The pedagogue of the gospel of Jesus must continue to educate themselves about what Jesus may be doing in the two-third world around him/her. Third, John the Baptist uses the power/influence (knowledge base/community) he has to empower another. Again Tolbert says, “ignoring one’s power or pretending it does not exist fools no one”, least of all people much too familiar with the thinly veiled disguises of neo-colonialism. Fourth, “John the Baptist knows who he is, he knows who Jesus is and he knows the difference”. This is a reminder that a healthy self-awareness, authenticity and integrity must undergird any and all efforts in trans-border biblical teaching.⁶

These observations, invaluable as they are (whether or not one agrees with the biblical springboard of John) must be held in some kind of creative tension with the conversation pointing out the worthiness of minoritized readings and community exegesis. Incarnationally minded bible pedagogues have to be products of both worlds.

From the above two bullet points, ironically, it is clear that we are called to demonstrate both the attitude of John and the disposition of Jesus.

Pedagogy: Pursuing a Post-Colonial Optic

- Recognizing diversity, minoritized readings, community exegesis, exercises for dwelling in the word, valuing non-foundational knowledge and building interpretive confidence.

⁶ Fernando f Segovia “et al” *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, ed’s FF Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1995

This is the point on which methodology hinges the most. It is at this point that the teacher/critic must begin to release the stranglehold of privileged education, knowledge, control, power and authority but hold onto conviction and truth. It is at this point that the missional pedagogue must navigate a way of moving between the knowledge communities from which she comes and the knowledge communities into which she is drawn. It is at this point that the cross border teacher-critic must learn the meaning of daring and interpretive risk. It is at this point that the bible educator must find a way to stay in touch with the great (interpretive) tradition as well as hear new voices from the margins. It is at this point that the challenge is faced of teaching biblically without imposing interpretively. These challenges may never be fully resolved, but they must be navigated. This is not unlike the notion of “tensegrity” – “tension + integrity = tensegrity”. This term architect Buckminster Fuller coined to talk about the incredible stability of structures that are built from competing forces held together with respect to their individual integrities.⁷

- Relationality, biblical theology and Christian intimacy

The sterility of theological discourse must be complimented by the African value on relationality and the biblical accent on Christian intimacy. ‘Your truth is not my truth’ outside of a meaningful and mutually vested relationship. As they say, at the risk of echoing post-modern relativism, it may be true but it’s not mine. God in Heaven remains true, real, right and active, but remains aloof outside of a relationship with Jesus. So much so is the experience of the African mentality with regard to relationship. To put this another way, if something which is true is impactful enough to cause one’s life to be

⁷ As referenced by Mary E Hess in her comments on this paper

changed, then it must be worth taking the time to develop a relationship within which to mediate and demonstrate that truth. A loving God is humanly mediated through a loving action within a relationship of integrity and dignity. This, my friends in Mozambique have been able to grasp. “Children learn to hear and speak in connection with their discovery of their bodies ability From the very beginning human speech is permeated by physicality. Gesture and speech are so interwoven that our very faces speak. Word and body, word and action are so bound up together that they cannot be separated.”⁸

- Creating safe spaces and border communities

Creating a safe pedagogical space has to do with making room for both cultivating personal well-being and a sense of security that builds interactive confidence as well as physically organizing a space for learning that fosters community, intimacy, relationality, interactivity and levels the playing fields as it were. This is particularly pertinent to any effort to be continually self-aware as an educator in post-colonial Africa where the teacher/critic ought to be intentional about being sensitive to every colonial ‘power-play’.

It is worth keeping in mind that to do biblical studies in post-colonial Mozambique for instance, the pedagogical package is always labeled, ‘CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE.’ There is a history that challenges credibility. Designing physical space that supports community and learning in remote homesteads in Africa is more decisive in shaping outcomes than one first recognizes. It is evident that most learning spaces are designed for control, negotiation, persuasion as well as to

⁸ Oswald Bayer, *Living By Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, Lutheran Quarterly Books, Grand rapids, William B Eerdmans, 2003

reinforce some kind of unspoken power differential.” The question to keep in mind then is; what kind of space will best nurture community exegesis and foster interpretive interactivity?

- Luther’s reformation insight of the ‘word’ that accomplishes things

This is a reference to Luther’s understanding of the *active word of God* (*Promissio*). This is said to have been Luther’s evangelical breakthrough of the reformation. This is an understanding of God’s promises as being performative, that God’s word does what it says. This may be, as Bayer suggests, the reformational turning point of Luther’s theology. The word of God’s promise in Christ actually creates something before not in existence. It does not describe a state of affairs but actually constitutes it. By way of example, the customary alternative of ‘forensic’ or ‘effective’ is no alternative at all. The forensic is effective, and the effective is forensic, What God says, God does. The reverse is also true. What God does, God says, His doing is not ambiguous. God’s work is God’s speech. God’s speech is no fleeting breath. It is a most effective breath that creates life that summons into life... the kingdom is present when the word that makes everything new is heard and believed.⁹ This Joshua Miller, in his dissertation, points to Bayer as saying that this” is the very center of Luther’s theology and the thing that truly makes reformational theology reformational.”¹⁰ This is the reformational breakthrough of the effectual word of Gods promise.

⁹ Joshua C Miller. *The Hidden God in the Lutheran Theology of Oswald Bayer* (Ph.D. dissertation, Luther Seminary, 2012).

¹⁰ Joshua C Miller. *The Hidden God in the Lutheran Theology of Oswald Bayer* (Ph.D. dissertation, Luther seminary, 2012)

This insight is labored for the following reason. Most scholastic educational Christian theology has robbed the bible of this effectual meaning and dynamic of the word of God. It has opened a highway for the bible to be taught and engaged with in a purely academic, cognitive and intellectual way without any consideration being given to it as the effectual word of God that constitutes things. Propagating this kind of (evangelically dysfunctional) teaching in a pioneer biblical studies context like remote Africa is colonization (re) of the highest order.

De-colonized biblical studies must remain sensitive to the fact that any and all theological education for liberation is done from the word of God that is not only taught and learnt but actually by its very articulation creates and brings things into existence that once were not. The effectual word of God must not be severed and uncoupled from biblical studies! This is at the heart of engaging in truly transformative biblical studies and theological education in a colonially ravaged sub-continent.

The bible, truly is as Brueggemann says, “the book that breathes new life”.¹¹

- Teaching into destiny (I do not want to be shy to use the term destiny, in its fullest sense of purposed inevitability, because, for example, as Barth says, biblically, one of them (doctrines) [human freedom for instance] is always true in experience and thought, and we must always believe the other [divine predestination] that we do not see.)¹²

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*, Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

¹² Robert McAfee Brown “et al” *Thy Word is Truth: Barth on Scripture*. ed George Hunsinger. Grand rapids, William B Eerdmans, 2012

This is important as missional exegetes make every effort to avoid importing efforts at harmonization, fabricating a higher conceptual synthesis (meta-physic) or manufacturing a non-contradictory and spurious reading of biblical texts that are artificial. Rather the teacher acknowledges that the bible can be “‘vigorously one-sided’”¹³ accentuating one aspect very pointedly in order to speak truthfully to a specific situation. In this way Barth says texts mutually supplement and counter balance one another.

Paul Minnear refers to the interdependence of texts. This is the age old problem of the precise relation between God’s part and man’s in every event. He goes on to say that in

“secular and speculative thought this is the problem of apparent logical incompatibility of divine election and human freedom, for instance. The presence of the problem cannot be denied. The apparent contradiction is present in every book of the bible and is axiomatic in all biblical thinking. The omni-presence of this problem in the bible cannot be contested; the most striking fact however, is not its ubiquity but the lack, in biblical authors, of viewing its presence as a problem. The biblical writers were not disturbed by what seems to modern readers a glaring contradiction.”¹⁴

Again this point is pressed because it mightily impacts what might be called teaching the whole counsel of God at the expense of adopting, importing and imposing an interpretive preference.

Finally to underlie this point, if in the act of teaching one understands with utter earnestness the effectual nature of God’s word then the teacher/critic will always be

¹³ Robert McAfee Brown “et al”, *Thy Word is Truth: Barth on Scripture*, ed George Hunsinger, Grand rapids, William B Eerdmans, 2012

¹⁴ Paul Sevier Minnear, *Eyes of Faith: A Study in the Biblical Point of View*, Philadelphia, Westminster press, 1946

mindful that any exercise in biblical studies is a means of God creating and bringing a people into His purposed inevitability (destiny).

Program: Pursuing a Post-Colonial Optic

- Maximizing the African consciousness and the biblical mentality

Much of contemporary writing in the field of African biblical studies has focused, at least in part, on indigenizing western theological categories in the form of culturally relevant African narrative theologies. This is not necessarily the most helpful nor only approach. In addition to this, one way missional trans-border bible teacher/critics would be hugely assisted in their efforts at fostering genuine biblical studies in Africa would be to explore the many and interesting parallels between the biblical mentality and point of view as a whole and the general African consciousness.

Two impediments to doing bible studies in Africa by a euro-centrally influenced missionary teacher are; first, simply adapting content, and continuing to communicate via a western philosophical systematized construct. Second; by simply retelling biblical narratives, making use of traditional stories with parallel plot lines and characters etc. Both of these approaches miss in part some of the essential and co-extensive mutual consciousnesses that the biblical consciousness and the traditional African consciousness share in common.

This massively important point requires further diagnosis if educators are going to truly engage in any form of decolonized biblical studies. How does the biblical mentality, philosophical and systematic theological constructs and the African consciousness relate to one another? It may be that an enlightenment encyclopedic (pigeon-hole) theological main frame erected around the scaffolding of an ordered

coherent and necessarily consistent philosophical system is not a good way to grasp the biblical mentality, nor attempt to communicate the biblical point of view into an African consciousness effectively. This is an example of the futility of systems thinking to grasp the biblical mentality, to communicate the scriptural narrative and to comprehend the African consciousness. Contemporary theology with all of its historical baggage seems to be more comfortable starting at the point of a meta-physical encyclopedic systematic theology and doctrinal pigeon holing and afterward engaging the text as the problematic that doesn't fit. This is an example of a bent in theological education to dismantle the bible and then wonder how all the texts fits back together again. The Western theological system does a rather impressive 'double twist' gymnastic dismount through both time and space when teaching the bible.

The following diagram will attempt to illustrate this point:

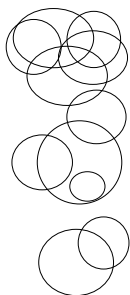


Diagram A

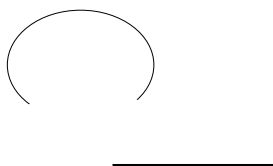


Diagram B

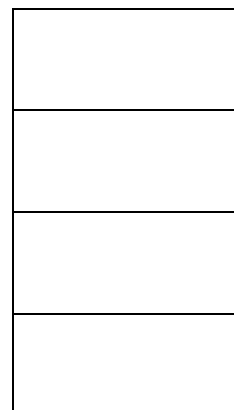


Diagram C

An inter dependent, inter connected, multi - dimensional and multi - faceted world of metaphor, personification, parable, symbol, image, history, story and sign that is relationally irreducibly complex.

A series of gymnastic flic-flacks transforming time and space. These include the movement from a synchronic to diachronic point of view as well as movement from a qualitative appreciation to quantitative measurements.

A flat, one dimensional, linear and uni directional abstraction. An encyclopedic, categorizing and pigeon holing systematization of thinking. From metaphor to metaphysic

“A careful reading of the bible will reveal many mismatches of what is believed about the book and what is in the book... there is an inherent tension between the world of biblical metaphor and a system of doctrinally informed religious beliefs. There is a definite mismatch between biblical metaphor and dogmatic theology, Theology operates with abstract philosophical notions, where as much of the language of the bible is highly metaphorical... the notion of systematic thought comes from Greek philosophy and is not to be found in the Hebrew bible... Especially, for instance YHWH, the character in many a stirring tale, became the one without body parts or passions... who could see no problem at all between an abstract theological system and a congeries of concrete narratological images”.¹⁵

¹⁵ Robert P Carroll, *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible As Problematic For Theology*. London, SCM press, 1997

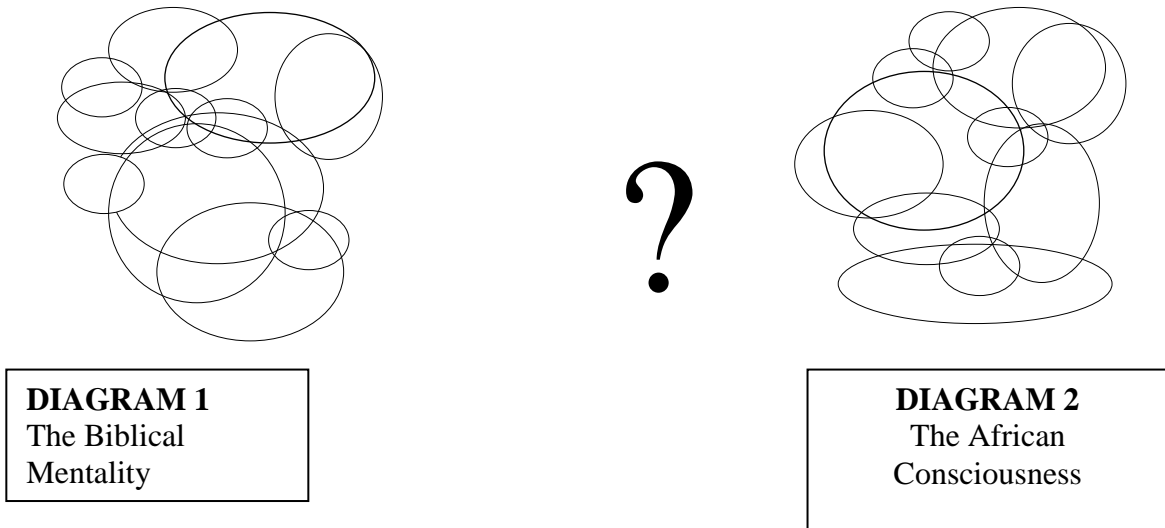
Another serious problem of distilling singular ideas from the bible is that they become lifted up and out of the biblical mentality as a whole. They are then interpreted and given meanings governed not by a biblical consciousness but rather by a preferred hermeneutic and the glasses of post enlightenment rationalism. This challenge merits an example. A concrete illustration of this problematic as it relates to the diagram above is the biblical notion of HOPE. Biblical hope is

“governed by the unfolding of meanings of what has already happened through God’s rescue from the present evil age... it is grounded in the actuality of the government of life by grace...it is hope that releases movement to God. This present, continuous and lively hope is spliced from the actuality of life in the bible. It is then interpreted through a modern lens, viewed diachronically and given a quantitative measurement. It is now reinserted as a sensible doctrine into a theological system as something projected into the future, as something expected to happen at some final point on a time line governed by a ticking clock and the passing of days on a calendar. Current methodologies utilize post-renaissance conceptions of the nature of chronological time and of historical processes, conceptions which do scant justice to the richness and complexity of those attitudes characteristic of the [biblical consciousness].”¹⁶

Many other biblical notions have gone through a similar theological mutation. Some may include the kingdom of God, Heaven, salvation and eternity. A perilous consequence of this for missional pedagogy has been a selective taming of the bible and domestication of God.

¹⁶ ?Paul Sevier Minnear, *Eyes of Faith: A Study in the Biblical Point of View*, Philadelphia, Westminster press 1943

To briefly address the relationship between the biblical mentality and an African consciousness the following diagram may be of assistance:



In summary then, both the biblical mentality and the African consciousness demonstrate the following characteristics:

- A synchronic rather diachronic experience of time
- A qualitative rather than quantitative system of measuring things
- A kaleidoscopic (tele and/or stereoscopic) view rather than single visioned
- Both are characterized by ‘emic’ accounts (From persons immersed within the culture) rather than ‘etic’ (culturally neutral)

This then gives rise to the following enquiry and provides the rationale for the previous chapter: Is it possible for the missional teacher hoping to engage in decolonized biblical studies to side-step philosophical theology in an attempt to cross the apparent divide between the biblical point of view and the African world View?

Making the most of post-modern parallels with pre-modern communities

Fascinatingly, Toulmin identifies the kinds of knowledge that qualify as real knowledge in the movement known as modernity:

1. “A move from oral to written, so that what is reliable is what is written;
2. A move from the particular to the universal, so that real truth is what is true everywhere
3. A move from local to general so that real truth had to be the same from locale to locale;
4. A move from the timely to timeless, so that the real is the unchanging”¹⁷

In the modern project real knowledge is written, universal, general and timeless.

Brueggemann says that Toulmin’s own analysis ends with a compelling argument that we can now see the reversal of the process of modernity as we from:

Written to oral

Universal to particular

General to local

Timeless to timely

Toulmin proposes that we now” increasingly accept as true and valid what is oral, particular, local and timely”.¹⁸

¹⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation, The Bible and Postmodern Imagination*, Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation, The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*, Minneapolis, Fortress press, 1993

This proposal decenters the western hegemonic myth of objectivity as defined and dominated by white euro-American males of a certain class. This is a decisive turn not toward post-modern relativism but opens the door with a view toward what Brueggemann calls *perspectivism*¹⁹. Or what previously in this paper has been referred to as *minoritized readings*.

Astonishingly, at the end of the day this U-turn is also a turn toward the characteristics of a pre-modern African self-consciousness and world-view. Something which the missional pedagogue must take full advantage of.

- Cosmological awareness, as examples, sacred fire, spirit of spirits and funeral rain.

Three examples of cosmological ignorance suffice to highlight the importance of this point. First, is the story of how a missionary in Nigeria could not understand why people esteemed and honored the place' he described as hell-fire until he stumbled on the local reverence for sacred-fire? Second, a frustrated missionary was not able to help local folk make sense of the term 'king of kings and lord of lords until he blurted out 'spirit of spirits.' And finally, a missionary presiding at a funeral, after hurriedly having moved the proceedings indoors during a rain storm, was confounded by the subsequent antagonism of funeral goers until someone took the time to explain that rain at a funeral was understood to be a divine blessing on the life of the dead person.'²⁰

- Christian Character and Theological Knowledge

¹⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation, The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*, Minneapolis, fortress press, 1993

²⁰ These examples are cited from my own experience as well as from conversations with numerous missionaries.

Many missionary teachers labor under the false assumption (and security) that all that is required of them is to convey what they know (theologically). This is a huge blind spot and has serious ramifications. The diligent reflective practitioner will be led to ask questions such as, why does a transfer of theological knowledge not lead to a transformation of lives? This is a reminder that the vocation of educators is not simply to relay acquired theological knowledge as information but also to communicate who and whose we are as the basis for transformation. This pedagogical blind spot of the missionary teacher ??? is evident in Africa.

- Translation and interpretation

The great deal of worth-while energy, effort and money put into language study and bible translation does not mean that the job of contextualizing the bible has been done. This mammoth task must now rightly serve as the springboard of opportunity to somehow build genuine contextual communities of decolonized biblical studies, community exegesis and interpretive insight.

... Paul Minnear puts the issue like this,

“Let our intention be clearly understood. Our purpose is not to translate separate biblical words into words which are already familiar...giving the illusion of comprehension. Nor is the goal the conversion of readers to a specific form of biblical faith or conduct, although we do not try to conceal our own preferences. In this study we are concerned to test the possibility of making intelligible the biblical mentality as a whole.”²¹

- African Story: relevant texts and narrative immersion

²¹ Paul Sevier Minnear, *To Die and live: Christ's Resurrection and Christian Vocation*, NY, Seabury, 1977

“Whoever can give his people better stories
Than the one they live in is like a priest in
Whose hands common bread and wine become
Capable of feeding the very soul”²²

“The strange history in which the apostle stood is the true history within which I [we] too stand. The bible assumes from its interpreters not a hectic shuttling back and forth between two alien worlds [in an effort to be relevant and teach applicable texts], but a sharp ‘here I stand’ [in a re-described reality]. When opening the bible for teaching, all the more so in Africa, four points, amongst others, are important in a storied culture; the bible demands subjective appropriation, or the necessity of finding our place in the story, and not a dispassionate evaluation or the objective study of disconnected texts that only confuse the situation by transposing problems of life into problems of thought. Two, readers are invited into the strange new world found in the bible not via a systematic presentation of a persuasive scholarly thesis but rather through the witness of prophets and apostles.”²³

Three, “the teacher/story-teller must try to think not in terms of separate notions but of complex constellations of attitudes as interdependent wholes. We [the missional teacher/critic] must be able to comprehend the structural girders which give inner stability to a particular world view. And four, this task makes another demand, that the teacher/critic combine the macroscopic study of wider frames of reference with microscopic study of specific texts. The missional bible teacher and story teller must be able to follow, point by point, the successive ideas of a particular author, locating within these ideas clues to his implicit world-scape”²⁴

- African traditional religion and Luther’s experiential approach

African traditionalism is intensely interested in the life of the community and whatever threatens its survival, prosperity and harmony. It is not a speculative kind of religion. There are mythological expressions of the deeper secrets of life, there are proverbs and parables, there are rituals to strengthen and protect... all of that is meant to

²² Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation, The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*, Minneapolis, fortress press, 1993

²³ Paul Sevier Minnear, *Eyes of Faith: A Study in the Biblical Point of View*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1942

²⁴ Paul Sevier Minnear, *Eyes of Faith: A Study in the Biblical Point of View*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1942

convey what life is actually all about: social stability, human relationships, moral authority, health and vitality, protection against hostile forces, etc.²⁵

All that is to point out why the African consciousness responds better to Luther's type of theology built on the analyses of experience rather than to a speculative theology that is concerned with building a meta-physic.

- Christo-centricity

This forms the consensus of opinion of an impressive array of biblical scholarship quoted thus far, ranging from Barth, Brueggemann, Bayer, Minnear and Christian Smith, all point to the need to read the bible Christocentric ally.

Smith says scripture must be read in the light of the centrally defining reality of Jesus Christ and Berkouwer calls readers of the scripture to be 'conscious of this centralization, mindful of that word of Paul which clearly indicated the center; "For I decided to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 COR 2:2).²⁶

- Biblical studies and the vocation of the church (Maria Harris)

Just as biblical studies should not be detached from embodied pedagogy, sacramental theology, the 'effectual word' of God and Christian intimacy, nor should it be distinguished from the pastoral mandate to "Fashion Me a People".²⁷ It is an oxymoron to think in terms of doing biblical studies and teaching theology without also being

²⁵ Klaus Nurnberger, *Martin Luther's Message For Us Today: A Perspective from South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster publications, 2005

²⁶ ? Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not A Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*, Michigan, Grand rapids, Brazos, 2011

²⁷ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum In The Church*, Louisville KY, Westminster/John Knox press, 1989

conscious that the content of what is being taught is given for the shaping, fashioning, molding and making of a ‘peculiar people’ to fulfill a peculiar vocation

Maria Harris makes an invaluable contribution as she suggests the following curriculum that fashions a people and shapes a vocation.

“KOINONIA

The curriculum of Community

LEITURGIA

The Curriculum of Prayer

DIDACHE

The Curriculum of Teaching

KERYGMA

The Curriculum of Proclamation

DIAKONIA”²⁸

The Curriculum of Service

“MARTURIA

The Curriculum of Suffering”²⁹

In summary Walter Brueggemann has the following to offer as he thinks about theological education and healing the blind beggar (Mark 10:46-52). Fitting into the purpose of this paper, he says that the meaning of this healing narrative can be summarized in this way:

1. “The man’s illness reflects powerlessness in society that leads to economic disadvantage and physical liability.
2. The community is intent on perpetuating the man’s powerlessness by forcing him to be silent.
3. Hope (and desperation) leads the man to speak out.

²⁸ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum In The Church*, Louisville, KY, Westminster/John Knox press, 1989

²⁹ This is the sixth curriculum of the church as added by Mary Hess.

4. It is the availability of Jesus as a committed partner in dialogue that permits healing and the power to transform”³⁰

I have observed this dynamic many times over in Mozambique.

Brueggemann then asks what does all this have to do with theological education and suggests that these four points correspond directly to four crucial areas of need in theological education (or decolonized biblical studies).

1. “Theological education (and biblical studies) that promise healing and liberation must have a sociological imagination.
2. Theological education (and biblical studies) that promise healing and liberation must face the fact that a key issue in healing, salvation and liberation is power.
3. Theological education (and biblical studies) that promise healing and liberation must recognize that the first step in gaining power is bringing things to speech.
4. Theological education (and biblical studies) that promise healing and liberation must be unashamedly Christological.”³¹

He sums up these concerns impactfully, “Theological education (and decolonized biblical studies)...requires realism about social conditions; awareness of the issues of power and powerlessness; concern to allow those who have been silent to speak; and an emphasis on the centrality of Jesus.

The issue before theological education (and decolonized biblical studies and missional pedagogy) **is whether it will overcome its own vested interests** and learn the

³⁰ Walter Brueggemann, “Theological Education: Healing the Blind Beggar” *Christian Century* 103 no 5 F 5-12 1986, p114 - 116

³¹ Walter Brueggemann, “Theological Education: Healing the Blind Beggar” *Christian Century* 103 no 5 F 5 – 12 1986 p 114 - 116

healing processes revealed by Jesus. Without that process beggars are sure to remain blind and the blind are sure to remain beggars.”³²

Further foundational and formative questions that must be asked and kept in mind while shaping a curriculum (hopefully) by a self-aware educator may include, is there room to suspend personal theological commitments in missional pedagogy? How does the missional educator demonstrate genuine commitment to the text without perpetuating a wooden literalism or fundamentalism (dysfunctional evangelicalism)? Can the missional teacher/critic operate with an authentic biblical/theological conviction as well as create space for compromise? How can the missional bible teacher demonstrate complete logos centeredness without modeling and/or perpetuating the Biblicism prevalent in scholastic Christianity? At the end of the day how does one assist the progress of an engagement with the text in order to facilitate an encounter with God?

To frame these questions differently, Minnear asks this. “Had Israel become in large degree immune to the message of the prophets (e.g. John and Jesus) because it had accepted the authority of the scribes [missional teacher/critics], *thus substituting for the immediacy of God’s revelation the conventionally mediated knowledge of the scriptures?* Was it because their appeal to a secondary and derived authority seemed to them so adequate that they could hear but not obey Jesus’ demands?”³³ This remains the challenge to the role of the contemporary teacher of Christian Scripture.

³² Walter Brueggemann “Theological Education: Healing the Blind Beggar” *Christian Century* 103 no 5 F 5 - 12 1986 p 114 - 116

³³ Paul Sevier Minnear, *To Die and Live: Christ’s Resurrection and Christian Vocation*, NY: Seabury, 1977.

Biblical Hope and Theological Risk

Risking the incarnation and interpretation of the logos.

To conclude this chapter, a truly de-colonized and democratized approach to biblical studies must release the anxiety of pedantic interpretive control and dare to engage interpretive risk of the written word, just as God dared the interpretive risk of the word made flesh. This generation of missional teacher/critics must not encourage the accusation, or make a repeat offender.

Having made some observations in view of what might contribute to a curricular corrective the following chapter briefly looks at what may be a surprising and unexpected prophetic turn that only lends a further degree of sobriety to the task of the missional teacher attempting to engage in de-colonized biblical studies.

CHAPTER SIX

AN UNANTICIPATED TURN

Demythologizing Missional Pedagogy and Unveiling Biblical Prophecy

The revelation of John is a book about *conquest*. Conquering comes by either: destruction and oppression in the form of the beast, or conquering comes by faithfulness and fidelity to the truth and the lamb. According to Craig Koester, “the *word pictures* of the revelator are not describing one historical reality but convey a message. The word-pictures in revelation are saying that this is what things are really like – they give a perspective on things that are real. Again, they picture something so that the reader can see what’s really going on.”¹ This is a crucial interpretive stance in and of itself as it sets the trajectory for the following two harbingers directly related to missional pedagogy and the enterprise of this writing project:

- Decolonizing biblical studies reveals an unholy alliance – Imperial expansionism, missional pedagogy and the biblical Beast of the book of Revelations – conquering by conquest – the lamb and theology of the cross.
- A further unholy co-operation – capitalism, missional pedagogy and a coalition/collaboration with the Harlot of Babylon – profiting too much from holy things – the bride and the ethic of gift.

¹ Craig Koester, Revelation: Lectures Course, NT 4225, Spring 2012

Pedagogy and the Beast

Firstly, even a cursory historical investigation of the modern missional enterprise reveals a complicated alliance and co-mixture with colonial expansionism. It is a contention of this paper that John the revelator unmasks the hidden face behind any form imperialist expansionism that conquers by subjugation, oppression and destruction as that of the BEAST! The joint effort of missions and colonialism then, to speak 'bibally'², emits in a confusing alliance of the beast and the lamb that significantly dissolves and undermines the identity and impact of the mission of God in the world today. At the end of the day, when all the cards are on the table, Christian mission all over Africa is associated not with the conquest of fidelity to the word and the lamb but with a violent conquest of people, land and subjugation. This *VIOLENT* conquest then forms the basis of authority as well as the sign of legitimacy. As the colonialists marched on, conquest as the basis for authority was displayed in the power (of the beast) to dominate. So too then, conquest was a sign of the legitimacy of colonial rule, "I rule because I won and you lost." Victory gives the sense of legitimacy³. The historical identification of Christian mission on the back of colonial expansionism has birthed a truly abhorrent mentality for why the gospel of Jesus and the kingdom is legitimate. The gospel is legitimate not because it is associated with faithfulness to the lamb, fidelity to the word, patient endurance and redemptive suffering. But rather the missionaries and their message are perceived as being legitimate because they are associated with the winners, with the victors and the conquerors... and not with the overcomers.

² Craig Koester, Revelation Lecture Notes Course, NT 4225, Spring 2012

³ Craig Koester, Revelation Lecture Notes Course, NT 4225, Spring 2012

John portrays and presents the character of empire through a series of animal images, predatory animals; the lion, bear, leopard and the ten horned animal, all imaging the predatory use of power. John takes all of these beasts and says they really all are part of one beast, the power of empire – this is the predatory nature of empire.

The following comparison between the *beast* and the *lamb*⁴ serves to clarify why the alliance of colonialism and mission might be an intentional strategy of the ‘dragon’ to confuse those to whom the witnesses have been sent.

BEAST	LAMB
Was slain yet lived (Rev 13:3)	Was slain yet lived (Rev 5:6)
Conquers by war (Rev 13:7)	Conquers by sacrifice (Rev 5:5)
Oppressors people from	Ransoms people from
Every tribe (Rev 13:7)	every tribe (Rev 5:9)
Marked on their hands/foreheads (Rev 13:16)	Sealed on foreheads (Rev 7:3)

This startling juxtaposition of images is radically different to the confusing alliance of colonialism and mission. The damage of this co-operation conferred upon Christian mission is brought out into the open, recognized and named; it remains an all pervasive reality and hurdle, though not insurmountable.

⁴ Craig Koester, Revelation lecture Notes Course, NT 4225, Spring 2012

Pedagogy and the Harlot

Secondly, a simple glance at Christian mission and pedagogy reveals the frightening value and practice of capitalistic commodification. Mission's alliance with the conquering *beast in turn* sheds light on another unholy co-operation, namely that of world Christianity and bible pedagogy as they are seduced by the Harlot of Babylon. The revelator's perception of Babylon is that it is associated with seduction and intoxication. The image of the Harlot invites particular attention. It is worth being reminded that prostitution is driven by both *pleasure* and *profit*, and this same demand for pleasure and profit is the force behind much of society's machinations. The principle evoked from the image of prostitution is *fee for service* – everything is done for profit. The Babylon, on which the harlot is recumbent, is a city in which everything is reduced to a commodity and everything has a price! The perception conjured up by the word-picture of Babylon, prostitution and the harlot leaves readers with the unmistakable insight, prostitution – epitomizes relationships debased into commercial transactions⁵. For instance slavery and the 'merchants of bodies', sportsmen and the draft. The inevitable question is not if, but to what extent has Christian pedagogy assimilated the harlot mentality of 'fee for service'? The gospel has been commoditized and passage to its treasures requires privileged access to money, education and resources. Further, Jennings notes how theological education (happens?) without Christian intimacy⁶. The transfer of biblical knowledge has been thoroughly debased into a commercial transaction. The point is this, the knowledge of God which at some point has been and can only be received as gift has

⁵ Craig Koester, Revelation Lecture Notes Course, NT 4225, Spring, 2012

⁶ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology And The Origins of Race*, New Haven Conn, Yale University Press, 2010

been turned for a profit, no matter the guise. I believe that this is what William James Jennings refers to when he talks about Christianity operating within a diseased social imagination.

This process he notes is not simply social clumsiness but rather a complex process of disassociation and dislocation.

“It was [is] the negation of the Christian Intellectual posture reflective of the central trajectory of the incarnate life of the Son of God, who took on the life of the creature, a life of joining, belonging, connection and intimacy. Such a posture would inevitably present the likelihood of transformation not only of ways of thinking but of ways of life that requires the presence of risks and vulnerabilities associated with being in the social, cultural, economic and political position to be transformed.”⁷

Again, a simple juxtaposition of the biblical images of the *harlot* and the *bride*⁸ serve to highlight the re-described reality that Christian educators are called to press toward and live into.

HARLOT	BRIDE
Relationships debased into commercial transactions	Relationships of fidelity and trust
Opulent clothed in purple	Pure clothed in linen
Brutality clothed in the blood	Just clothed in the righteous
Of the saints	deeds of the saints

⁷ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology And The Origins of Race*, New Haven Conn, Yale University Press, 2010

⁸ Craig Koester, Revelation lecture Course Notes, NT 4225, Spring 2012

What aspects of this might be most significant for the world of missional theological pedagogy? As Dr. Koester points out, the revelator is startling readers not to induce guilt but toward an alternative imagination for something different. As he says, our mailing address may be Babylon, but we are called to live in Jerusalem.⁹ This must be a warning-call to bring change. What will it look like when education for liberation is disentangled and disencumbered from being entwined with evil? Always bearing in mind that the wheat and the tares, according to Jesus, will be with us and sometimes indistinguishable until the end of time. The missional teacher/critic is now left to respond to the question; how does this series of contrasting visions, of the beast and the lamb, of the harlot and the bride and of Babylon and Jerusalem shape (pedagogical) life now and invite the future?

A New Curriculum requires A New Jerusalem?

⁹ Craig Koester, Revelation Lecture Course Notes, NT 4225, Spring 2012

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

A number of points must be iterated. First, inescapably the drama (rightly called if teaching has to do with sacrament, the effectual word of God and destiny) of missional pedagogy must unfold between the word as promise and the word as prophecy.

- In this ‘rupture of the ages’, in this time of the seeming reversal of the promise and its apparent contradiction the teacher is first called toward faithfulness to the white horse rider whose name is called The Word Of God.
- In this eschaton, in the time of threat and warning, in the time of repentance and hope, in the time of intoxicating alliances and seductive cooperation the teacher is first called to faithfulness to the white-horse rider out of whose mouth ‘comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations’.

In the face of this seemingly all pervasive, defiant and ostensible incongruity of the promise, the faithful missional pedagogue must be attentive to the word as prophecy. While at the same time in the midst of pedagogical Armageddon in which the only weapon to come to the field is the word as sword in the mouth of Jesus, the faithful missional pedagogue must be assured of the word as promise.

The conversation around missional pedagogy must be placed within the framework of the word as both promise and prophecy because this not only places the spotlight on the educators *obligation* toward the content of scripture to be mined and

spoken but also on the educator's *responsibility* to the word as promise and her *accountability* to the word as prophecy.

Second, if the emergency is a contextual biblical pedagogy then the urgency in turn is threefold:

- Decolonized biblical studies – out of bed with the beast – powerful coalitions
- Democratized biblical studies – out of the strong man's house – powerful control
- Decapitalized biblical studies – out of the arms of the harlot – powerful collaboration

Third, I find it disconcerting that the three areas of awareness that surfaced in the aftermath of demythologizing missional experience correspond in some shape or form to the three biblical metaphors and associations unveiled as a consequence of this deconstruction. It may look as follows.

- Missional Posture and Democratized Biblical Studies, (control)
- Pedagogical Methodology and Decolonized Biblical Studies, (collaboration)
- Curricular Content and Decapitalized Biblical Studies, (coalition)

This is not to draw a direct inference between each of the above, only to illustrate the affiliations and possible influences that the teacher/critic must be wary of.

Fourth, consequentially this paper invites further sincere and transparent thinking engaging a number of matters;

- What does it look like to begin to extricate biblical studies and theological education from paranoid control (democratized) and fee for service Christianity

(decapitalized) – from the dragon to the lamb, from Babylon to Jerusalem and from the Harlot to the Bride?

At the end of all things, as missional pedagogues entrusted with the gift and call of contextual theological education, are we willing to reckon with the inevitable cost required, not only of decolonization and democratization, both of which can be embraced under the guise of and within the constraints of professionalism, but also to pay the personal and public price of de-capitalization?

- In the light of de-colonized biblical studies, how do reflective practitioners think constructively about and engage effectively with the puzzle of mission and race? Biblical studies may be de-colonized, but teachers may not be de-raced.
- **This paper invites serious thinking about the new colonialism. For instance, the reformed project has no problem with, as has been mentioned before, telling people what to think bibally and theologically, rather than teach people how to think bibally and theologically. Christian pedagogues must be both aware and sensitive to the nuances of the theological recolonization of the so called developing world by the interpretive super powers of the so called developed world.**
- This study raises the question whether conversations of contextualization are misplaced and should be replaced with dialogue about decolonization? Much effort, ink and thought has been spent on the dispute over what constitutes adequate contextualization. Would this be less of a contest if reflective practitioners were to focus less on contextualizing the modern, western, euro-American, enlightenment influenced and patriarchally biased interpretation of

the bible we have inherited, and look more toward decolonizing the text and its interpretation? Is this not just another case in point of the now clichéd “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brothers eye, BUT DO NOT NOTICE THE LOG THAT IS IN YOUR OWN EYE”¹ way of doing things.

¹ *The Holy Bible: New American Standard Version*. Creation House for the Lockman Foundation, 1971

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bayer, Oswald. *Living By Faith, justification and sanctification*, Lutheran Quarterly Books, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.
- Bliese, Richard H., et al. *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*, ed's Richard H. Bliese and Craig Van Gelder, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2005.
- Brueggemann, Walter. 'Theological Education: Healing The Blind Beggar.' *Christian Century*, 103 5 F 5- 12 1986, 114-116.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Texts Under Negotiation, The bible and postmodern Imagination* Minneapolis. Augsburg Fortress, 1993.
- Carroll, Robert P. *Wolf In The Sheepfold: The Bible As Problematic For Theology*, London, SCM Press, 1997.
- Cunningham, David S. *These Three are One, the practice of trinitarianTrinitarian theology*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- Freier, Paulo. *A Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, NY: Herder and Herder, 1921.
- Hess, Mary E. *Engaging Technology in Theological Education, All That We Can't Leave Behind*, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.
- Hesselgrave, David J. *Paradigms In Conflict: 10 Key Questions In Christian Mission Today*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005.
- Hooker, Morna D. "The letter to the Philippians" in *The New Interpreters Bible*, Nashville Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Jennings, William James. *Christian ImaginatioImagination.: Theology and Origins of Race*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Shaping The Scriptural Imagination: Truth, Meaning And The Theological Interpretation Of The Bible.* ed's Juel, Donald H, Shane Berg and Matthew Skinner, 2011.
- Kwiyani, Harvey. *Pneumatology and African immigrant congregations*, (Ph.D. diss, Luther Seminary, 2012).
- Levering, Matthew. *Predestination: biblical and theological paths*. Oxford :Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Miller, Joshua C. *The Hidden God In the Lutheran Theology of Oswald Bayer*, (Ph.D. diss, Luther Seminary, 2012).

- Minnear, Paul Sevier. *To Die and Live, Christ's resurrection and Christian*, NY: Seabury, 1977.
- Minnear, Paul Sevier, *Eyes of Faith, A Study in the Biblical point of View*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. *Teaching as a sacramental act*, Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004.
- Nurmberger, Klaus. *Martin Luther's message for us today, A perspective from South Africa*, Cluster Publications: 2005.
- Palmer, Parker J. *To Know As We Are Known, a spirituality of education*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1983.
- Segovia, Fernando F. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*, Maryknoll NY Orbis Books, 2000.
- Segovia, Fernando F., et al. *Reading from This Place, social location and biblical interpretation in global perspective*, ed's Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Smith, Christian. *The Bible Made Impossible, Why Biblicism Is Not A truly evangelical reading Of scripture*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012.
- Thy Word Is Truth: Barth on Scripture*, ed George Hunsinger, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2012.
- Wright, Christopher J. *The Mission Of God: Unlocking The Bibles grand narrative*, Downers Grove, IVP Academics, 2006.