

FAITH AND LIFE
A Christian Formation Curriculum
INFEMIT

INTRODUCTION

Preface

Ana is distressed. First, she had suddenly become a homeless migrant. Coffee prices had bottomed out. Business was no longer profitable, so the plantation owner had sold his land, and her entire family –along with the others that for generations had cut coffee—was forced off the land where they had been born, raised their families and slaved away for decades. It was not theirs after all... All they could do was pack up their meager belongings and rent rooms in the city. She had counted herself lucky when she had got a job in a *maquila* (a textile factory) a two-hour bus ride away. She hadn't even complained when she had to get up at 3am to prepare a meal for the family before boarding her bus. Nor when the only break she had in her ten-hour workday were fifteen minutes at noon. Nor when her husband had decided to venture North, to the United States, in search of opportunity, leaving her alone with her children in the crowded city. Strange people had been around the factory during the last couple weeks, but she had thought nothing of it. Until that morning. She arrived as usual, only to find hundreds of women outside the factory. A heavy chain hung on the gate and a small sign read: "*Por motivos de fuerza mayor esta fábrica ha cerrado*" (For reasons of 'a force beyond our control', this factory has been closed). She found out that union leaders had begun to pressure factory owners for workers' rights and benefits. Business was no longer profitable, so the company packed up in order to set up camp in a country with less 'restrictive' conditions, giving workers no previous notice. What now? Cries Ana. What now?

Ana's story of vulnerability is illustrative of the plight of millions in El Salvador, in Latin America, in the poor countries of the world, and in poor sectors of society within rich nations. It is the double conviction that this scene is wrong and that God's people are called to change matters that has motivated the creation of this Christian formation material.

The designers of this course share the belief that God—the Triune Creator and sustainer of all life—wants to grant full life to the entire creation and calls all people to be part of that life-giving work. Unemployment and poverty, inequality and injustice, homelessness and abuse, fractured families and marginalized minorities, envy and greed, none of these are ingredients in God's agenda for the world. And Christian faith must affect all these dimensions of life. Consequently Christian formation must contribute to establishing connections between God's good purposes and the every-day life of people.

This manual seeks to flesh out how those connections can be established. We are called to embody the faith in all our circles, family, church, work and society at large, Romanian Corneliu Constantineanu explains in the first article. Our theological grounding does not simply constitute a set of ideas but the very life stream of Christian Formation, affirms Philippino Al Tizon, in the second chapter. But theology is not something produced in some remote environment and simply handed over to others for them to apply. Indian Paul Josha lays out the need for contextualization, for “drinking from our own cups”, if our theological work is actually going to nourish life. And, finally, Latin American Ruth Padilla DeBorst outlines the pedagogical

principles on which this particular curriculum is based, the necessary paradigm within which formation can truly constitute an education for life.

This Christian Formation curriculum is intended for pastors and church leaders as well as for lay leaders and professionals in fields as diverse as emergency response, community development, advocacy, health, education, and the arts. It originated in Latin America,¹ where a team of Bible scholars, educators, theologians, psychologists and sociologists developed an initial curriculum that inspired hundreds of followers of Christ to engage more holistically in God's work in the world. World Vision International sponsored the translation of the material and now regional Working Groups made up by members and friends of the International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation (INFEMIT) are engaged in adapting it to various local contexts.

The hope of all who have contributed to this curriculum is that through it many people may grow in the work of transformation so that --by God's grace and the ministry of the Holy Spirit-- Ana and the millions like her may experience the full life God intended for them at creation.

¹ Members of the Latin American Theological Fellowship and the Kairos Foundation in Argentina.

Embodying the Faith: Christian Formation for Family, Church, Work, and Society

Corneliu Constantineanu

Introduction

One of the serious issues facing classical Evangelical theological education is its almost exclusive concentration of the resources on the education of pastors and clergy in the seminaries. And this is somewhat surprising since there is a clear understanding and emphasis in Evangelical theology on the priesthood of all believers. What about all the others, the lay people, who follow and serve Christ in different capacities in their daily work? How would they get hold of some of the rich resources to enable them in their own service and authentic witness to the Kingdom of God? It is in response to these and similar questions that this Christian formation curriculum is designed - a solid, biblical education for all with a focus on four of the most prominent dimensions of our existence: family, church, work and society.

For far too long the church has divorced faith from the other aspects of reality and reduced it to a purely spiritual dimension with terrible consequences for the embodiment of the gospel. We have reduced faith to church attendance and to a private life of prayer and spirituality, a faith for Sundays and primarily within the walls of the church. Consequently, we did not gain the theology or the practical skills to embody the Christian faith in our families, at our work, in the society at large, from Monday to Saturday. This does not mean that the church is of little importance. On the contrary, just as it is shown in this book, the community of those gathered

in the name of Christ, their life together, worshipping God and building each other in Christ, is crucial for Christian faith and formation. What we want to emphasize here is the often-neglected truth that the life of the church, her ministry, her witness to the lordship of Christ and to the new creation, must go beyond the walls of the building and overflows into the world. We need to learn afresh what it means exactly to follow Christ in our service to the members of our family, what it means to let our faith shape our attitude and activity at work, what it means to let the lordship of Christ manifest in our engagement with society. Christian life and learning need to capture all areas of life, and our commitment to God and discipleship to Jesus must comprise all dimensions of existence. We need to rediscover this holistic, integrative understanding of Christian formation.

The Search for Integration

The contemporary mode in education in our society is very fragmented. The compartmentalization of knowledge, while it has had some advantages and has led to some wonderful discoveries, it has also led to a fragmentation of our life in different compartments: scientific, religious, social, etc. However, the reality within which we live is complex, interconnected and inter-related and one cannot simply separate and segregate the pieces. We have to understand and cope with life as a whole, in all its diversity and complexity.

We are discerning nowadays a great cry for integration, for a meaningful way of life in which one makes sense and integrates faith within everyday realities of life in society. Young people especially, but not only, raise serious and urgent questions: How is my faith connected with all

other dimensions of life? Is faith just private or has it also to do with the public domain? Is there a place for Christian witness in a secular environment, and if yes how is that witness to be displayed with integrity in such a context? What does it mean to be an authentic Christian in a secular and pluralist context?

The fundamental drive for this kind of whole-life integration has its basis in the reality of the lordship of Christ over all creation, in all matters private and public, is a given. This is excellently illustrated in the life and writings of Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), a Dutch Reformed theologian, journalist, university founder and statesman. In his inaugural speech (“Sphere Sovereignty”) at the opening of Free University which he founded in 1880, Kuyper expresses Christ’s lordship over all things in remarkable and unforgettable words: “Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: “Mine!” [A. Kuyper, *A Reader*, 1998].

Such a holistic perspective is vital for Christian formation and we have to fully understand and relate to the complex, dynamic and intrinsic relationships between the various dimensions of life. There is thus an urgent need in the contemporary world to find ways to relate faith to all aspects of life, to allow the gospel to bear on the most important issues of life. This chapter explores the need for integrating faith to the areas of family, church, work and society.

Family

Family matters. It is both the building block of the community and the source of our sense of identity in relationships. That is why a major area addressed in the formation of a disciple of Christ is how to relate his/her faith to family. How do we let our faith shape our relationships, commitments and responsibilities in the family? How do we honour our Lord as spouses, parents, children, sisters or brothers? How do we allow Jesus Christ to shape and challenge our deep, cultural models of family? How do we cultivate our relationship with Jesus in our family context? How do we enable all members of family to go into a deeper and fuller relationship with Jesus? And how do we practice the presence of Jesus in our family?

It is very important to understand the complex reality and dynamic of the family from its beginnings in human history, as the good creation and plan of God, to the continuous changes over the course of history of the roles and status of the family in society, to the crisis and many conundrums of the contemporary family. We have to understand how the various cultural factors around us influence and shape our view of family. For an authentic disciple of Christ is vital to have a solid, biblical view of marriage and family and a proper perspective on the roles, responsibilities and relationships in the family. Obviously, one needs to go beyond knowledge to a commitment to act in obedience to Christ in whatever role or responsibility one has in the family. Indeed, Christian formation implies a real participation in an intentional context of learning and practicing the faith in the midst of everyday life.

One of the important roles of a leader in Christian formation is to enable his/her students to set their everyday experiences in a theological context, to assist them to evaluate and critique the

cultural models of family in the light of the Word of God. In the tragic realities of cohabitation, divorce and single parent household we see around us, we realize the distortions from the initial plan and desire of God for the family. In our attempt to strengthen families we have to respond to these real-life pressures and challenges in a Christianly manner and bring the promise of God's grace and restoration of the family. It is God's will to see harmony, restoration and wholeness in human family.

Faith transforms family. It changes and transforms us into the likeness of Christ. It enables us to learn to listen, to understand, to accept, to forgive, to reconcile, to love. The way curriculum is designed, students are encouraged to think, reflect, evaluate, and practice the biblical model of family in all roles and responsibilities. Faith makes a real difference in the way life is experienced in the family. And this is not an abstract, theoretical or private faith but one which is embodied in concrete manifestations of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, first and foremost within the family.

Church

The church is the community of the King, made up of those who are "in Christ." It witnesses to the presence and manifestation of the Kingdom of God and is a sign of the new creation that has begun with the death and resurrection of Christ. As such, the living community of the new creation has a vital and unique role in God's plan for the redemption of the world. Thus, when we speak about the church, this is not simply about a particular edifice, or an institution, a tradition or a specific culture. The church is much more than any of these. It is the only

prophetic community and a sign of hope which point to the lordship of Christ over the entire creation; it is the community that continues the redemptive mission of God in the world.

To learn what it is, what it should be and what it is not yet the church, is an important aspect of spiritual formation. A solid, healthy, biblical perspective on the church is crucial. It is often said that while Jesus' call is appealing, the church is appalling! And we have to admit, with humility, that many times the church is not what it should be. That is why, in addition to it being the prophetic gift for the outside world, the church needs more than ever to exercise that gift also inside the church and hear the call to repentance and change. And this is the grace that God has given us: that the church is also the community of repentance and forgiveness, a community where we learn how to live out our destiny; it is a community of healing and restoration; of forgiveness and reconciliation; of faith, hope and love.

As disciples of Jesus, we are grateful for the amazing grace he has given us in the church, the community of those who follow and obey him, for worship, fellowship, uplifting, teaching and building up our faith. And also to be part of the great story of the redeemed people who participate actively in God's continuing redemption of the world.

Work

Work takes the most part of people's active life, it encompasses and determines the lives of men and women. It is thus appropriate that "work", one of the central components of daily living, has become a major concern for society at large, from many angles and for many considerations: in

terms of providing the possibility and access for everyone to work, for improving the conditions of work, for limiting the exploitations through work, for the transformation of the meaning of work. What is even more revealing is the fact that after a too long neglect of the subject in the Christian quarters, there is an increased theological and ecclesiastical interest in the question of work. There is a greater sense of the significance and urgency of theological reflection on the subject of work from a biblical perspective.

Work is enormously important for the life of human beings in society. Its significance consists first of all in the fact that, through it, people provide for their subsistence. In order to live, one has to work. It is not a surprise to anyone that Apostle Paul understood it very well when he admonishes the Thessalonians “if anyone will not work, neither let him eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). But work also provides a sense of individual and social identity as our daily work shapes and determines, to a certain extent, what we are. Thus, work is indispensable for people’s continued existence, well-being and identity. Being such a vital area of our lives it has to be a substantial issue for theological reflection.

The second reason for serious theological consideration on work is given by what can be called “the crisis of work,” which is experienced in various degrees throughout the world. Whether we think of child labor, unemployment and discrimination of work, or of exploitation and dehumanization of work, these are serious challenges that many people face in the contemporary world. It is not the place here to go into any details about these sobering problems or even begin to unpack the various personal, structural or technological causes of this crisis. Their very

existence forces us to think responsibly and creatively in order to find possible and realistic solutions. Unfortunately, throughout the history of Christianity, the subject of work has been of little concern for the Church. As a consequence many Christians have inadequate, defective and even negative attitudes toward work. This is yet another reason for the urgent need for biblical and theological reflection on work.

Christian formation thus, if it really wants to be as comprehensive as possible, cannot avoid this crucial subject of work. On the contrary, it should strive to find the larger biblical story about the ultimate significance and meaning of human life within which to integrate the topic of work. We should, therefore, look for stories, for theological and biblical principles that serve as guidelines for the practical decisions we have to make in order to relate our beliefs to the world of work. The contours of a biblical theology of work, however, could only be properly understood and interpreted within the larger story of God's good creation, of the fall with its devastating consequences for humankind and the entire creation, and, especially, in the light of the great story of God's redemption that culminated with the death and resurrection of Christ and the beginning of the new creation 'in Christ.'

In our efforts to integrate faith and work in Christian formation, we have to insist that the best way to understand human work is to place it into the larger context of God's work, of human creation in the image of God, of God's command for people to work as part of his provision for human life and of human cooperation with God in work. We should further insist that it is the Spirit of God who inspires and endows people with gifts and skills for various work and

activities (Exodus 31:2-5; Judges 3:10; 1Sam. 16:13), that work has both an intrinsic and instrumental value. In order to build an appropriate, positive attitude toward work it is important to know that our work matters to God; that work as cooperation with God has fundamental meaning and ultimate significance in the context of the eschatological transformation of the world; that God's rest becomes the model for our rest; that if redeemed from abuse, leisure can become a part of our life of worship as we renew our identity in Christ in anticipation of the new creation of God.

It is our hope that such a biblical understanding of work brings dignity to our labor when understood as service and it sees work as involving social benefit and a contribution to the common good of society. Given the fact that the worker is more important than work and that the attitude of the worker can transform the work, the moral worker accepts the duty of work as a means of providing for human needs, of finding purpose in life, and of glorifying God.

Society

The last aspect concerning the integration of faith and life is the dynamic relationship of the disciple of Jesus to society at large. If one's faith is primarily lived out "in the world", then one has to find appropriate resources for an authentic Christian living in the world, for a proper relation to the life of contemporary culture and society. Given the lordship of Christ over entire reality, a Christian should be concerned to make sense of his/her faith as it interacts with all aspects of life in society.

We should strive to re-unite different compartments of our existence into one realm of reality in which body and soul, religion and politics, private and public, individual and social aspects of reality are intermingled in a complex, unified vision of life. To be sure, we have to be aware of the ambivalence and the dialectical relationship of Christians to the world as they experience the tension of being *in* the world yet not *of* the world. Paul's language of "belonging" and "separation" offers a view into the way in which the identity of those who "belong to Christ" was maintained and positioned vis-à-vis the outside world. On the one hand, the insider/outsider terminology implies a negative perception of society and the "qualitative difference" between outsiders and insiders. On the other hand, however, Christians are not to withdraw from society. Paul encouraged his congregations not only to continue to participate, as good citizens, to the life of the city, but also to behave in a manner that will bring approval from the outsiders. Thus, for example, the strong work ethic of the believers in Thessalonians was intended to "earn the respect of outsiders" (1 Thess. 4.12), while the exercise of the spiritual gifts in the Corinthian congregation were to be amended not to give the wrong impression to the outsiders (1 Cor. 14.23).

We can surely say that the attitude and relation of early Christians to the outside world was complex and it should be given careful consideration. The tension should not be removed: the world is God's good creation and yet is now in a present state of corruption and the 'god of this world' is active in it; Christians were "resident aliens" in this world and had their "citizenship in heaven" (Phil. 3.20), and yet they were encouraged neither to withdraw from the world (1 Cor. 5.10) nor to totally deny or reject its realities and values. In fact, it was precisely because of their

new identity and status that they were able to work towards the transformation of this world.

1 Thessalonians, one of Paul's earliest letters, is an excellent example of how Paul was, from the very beginning of his ministry, concerned with both the internal cohesion and growth of the Christians communities, but also with the Thessalonians' social conduct and positive attitude and behaviour towards outsiders. It was of greatest importance for Paul that Christians should not "repay evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and *to all*" (1 Thess. 5.15); that they should "increase and abound in love for one another and *for all*" (1 Thess. 3.12); that they should "aspire to live quietly, to mind [their] own affairs, and to work with [their] hands... so that [they] *may behave properly toward outsiders*" (1 Thess. 4.11-12).

One important aspect of Christian formation, therefore, is to encourage an active and positive, even though critical at times, involvement of the Christian in the world, advocating practices that are conducive to a meaningful and peaceful life in the larger society.

Conclusion

As educators and Christian leaders, we do take it as our task to inspire a new generation of believers and Christian professionals, to pursue with all the intellectual seriousness a holistic vision of the Kingdom of God, a vision in which faith determines a particular way of being *in* and *for* the world. In the contemporary context it is crucially important to attempt to bring back the centrality of the Bible and of biblical thinking as a solid and significant basis, not simply for living as Christians in the world, but also for the life of contemporary culture and society. A

holistic understanding of Christian life and mission will lead to an appropriate involvement of the church in the world as agents of change and social transformation.

If there is any truth in the affirmation that our conduct is shaped by the condition of our vision, it follows from that, in order to transform this world we need a particular vision of life. Not just any vision but a vision of righteousness, reconciliation, and hope for this world; a vision for a culture of love and acceptance, of forgiveness and grace, of justice and mercy, a vision of the Kingdom of God; a vision of the lordships of Christ over every aspect of reality. We are always painfully aware that we, ourselves, will never bring the Kingdom of God on earth, and so we will always bear with us at each little progress toward the final kingdom of God, the condition of provisionality. This, however, will not hinder us to struggle and pour our lives to spread the Kingdom of God until God will finally bring everything to a perfect completion.

It is out of our passion for God, for His people and His world, and out of this vision for the transformation of the world and the anticipation of the Kingdom of God that we continue to devote our life to theological training and Christian formation. And it is *this vision* that we hope *to inspire* in the younger generation of leaders and disciples of Jesus. It is to that end that, together, hopeful in the final triumph of God in history, we earnestly pray, study, live, work and rejoice.

Theological Foundations for Christian Formation Al Tizon

Our formation as Christian leaders involves understanding ourselves from many angles—psychological, sociological, historical, etc.—but Christian formation is at the core a theological process. Without a solid theology undergirding our thinking and doing in the world, our formation will be weak at best and misshapen at worst.

There are certain essential theological elements that constitute the foundation, each of which will be discussed below. The ingredient that integrates and strengthens the foundation, however, is the view of the final authority of the Bible. This is not to be confused with claiming biblical inerrancy or infallibility, which tends to divide rather than unite and which tends to cultivate literalism and legalism rather than discernment and freedom. Rather, to submit to the final authority of Scripture is simply to affirm the Holy Bible as the Christian's primary source of truth, ethics, and hope; for it is the Bible that contains the most comprehensive and clearest narrative of God's creation and redemption known to humankind. As such, all other sources of truth, ethics and hope must go through the filter of Scripture. Moreover, submitting to biblical authority means that the ultimate measure of faithfulness is how well the love, peace, righteousness and justice of God manifest in and through our lives.

Claiming the Bible as the ultimate source of truth and guide for our lives is absolutely essential for a strong, sound theological foundation. As we interact devotionally, scholarly, and practically with the whole of the biblical story, several theological elements emerge that we need to consider.

Kingdom of God

The first of these elements is the biblical reality of the reign or kingdom of God. Although the term does not appear until the New Testament, it is a reality that permeates all of Scripture. The kingdom of God refers to God's rule of love and justice, righteousness and peace—in a word, *shalom*—which began at creation (Gen. 1-2), but undermined in the fall of humanity (Gen. 3). It refers to God's desire to reestablish *shalom* through the formation of a people, called to live under God's rule. But when God's people failed to live up to her calling, the prophets kept the hope of the kingdom of God alive.

So when Jesus came on the scene proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mk. 1:14-15), his Jewish compatriots knew what he was talking about. Jesus preached the good news that the long-awaited rule of God was now here in his person. Through his life, ministry, death and resurrection and the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit, God's reign has once again appeared in a discernible, experiential way. This genuine experience *now* of God's love and justice, righteousness and peace is but a foreshadowing of what is finally to be established in God's future—a realm in which God truly reigns, where God “. . . will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more . . .” (Rev. 21:4).

Until that day comes, anyone—Jew or Gentile—can enter in and become a citizen of this kingdom by faith in Jesus Christ. Collectively, these kingdom citizens constitute God's people today called the church, on which the mantle of bearing witness to the kingdom of God has been

passed. As the Spirit-empowered church of Christ, it is called to demonstrate what life is like under the reign of God until the kingdom vision will be fulfilled. Until that time, followers of Jesus have been taught by the Master to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). The kingdom of God is now and not-yet.

In sum, the kingdom of God is a reality ruled by the God of love and justice, and peace and righteousness—in a word, *shalom*—demonstrated and proclaimed in and through the Spirit-empowered church of Jesus Christ as its members love one another and practice *shalom* in and for the world, until the return of Christ when the vision of the kingdom of God will be fulfilled.

Lordship of Christ

This kingdom is inseparably connected to the person of Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord of all. What ancient Israel was to embody in its national life Jesus embodied in his person. Jesus is the kingdom personified, the Son of God. Since the time of Christ, entry into the kingdom is by faith in Jesus Christ. No longer is kingdom citizenship dependent on one’s heredity or nationality, but rather on one’s allegiance to Christ. Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9).

The claim that Jesus is Lord carries with it both a set of particular theological affirmations and a set of practical implications. Theologically, it affirms the person of Jesus as an integral member of the Trinity who provided the way of salvation through the cross and empty tomb. The claim affirms further the belief in, and eager anticipation of, the return of Christ to fulfill the vision of the kingdom of God at the end of time.

Practically, to claim that Jesus is Lord means leading Christ-centered lives in all realms of life—personal, familial, ecclesial, social and political. If Jesus is Lord, then mother, father, spouse children or any other relationship is not (Lk. 14:26). This is not, however, a license to neglect our families and other significant relationships! On the contrary, it means that the *shalom* of God should characterize those relationships. It means to love our spouses, rear our children in the ways of the Lord, respect our parents, and foster our friendships with the love of Christ.

Furthermore, if Jesus is Lord then vice, mammon, a political system, or any other power that seeks to compete for the government of our lives is not (Matt. 6:24; Jn. 18:33-37; Col. 3:5). This does not mean relegating ourselves to a life of self-denial and/or to be neglectful of our civil duties. It means on the contrary to live abundantly and generously, and it means to let the good news of Christ and Christ's kingdom inform our social and political engagement.

To say that Jesus is Lord is to say that Jesus, the Son of God, is the focal point of existence itself, as well as the defining center of our lives.

Gift of the Spirit

Our pledge of allegiance to Christ and Christ's kingdom is to accept the call to live according to the love, justice, righteousness and peace of the kingdom God. But we cannot do this faithfully or effectively without the gift of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives. As followers of Jesus, we acknowledge the inadequacy of our own power, and we learn to depend on the power of the Spirit to yield the Spirit's fruit in our lives (Gal. 5:22-25), and to use the Spirit's gifts to build up

the church (Eph. 4:11-16) and to engage the world in mission (Book of Acts).

In order to prepare his disciples to live faithfully and boldly in the world, Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, the one who will teach and enable them to do all that Jesus did and more (Jn. 14:12, 25-26) and the one who will convict the world of sin (Jn. 16:7-11). The gift of the Spirit was indeed received, as recorded in Acts 2, and the rest of the Book of Acts (as well as the rest of the New Testament) demonstrates how the Spirit-empowered church of Christ developed and was used of God to bear witness to the gospel of the kingdom “in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The key in understanding the early church’s success in “turning the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) is the role of the Holy Spirit. In fact, some assert that the Book of Acts is not so much the acts of the apostles, but the acts of the Holy Spirit *through* the apostles. Christian formation, therefore, requires profound submission to the person of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Scriptures employ phrases such as being filled or baptized in the Spirit to convey this profound submission (Acts 2:4; Eph. 5:18; Acts 1:5, to name a few). There have been many debates about the nature of baptism in the Holy Spirit, particularly concerning how believers can know if they have in fact been baptized in the Spirit. Is the ultimate evidence for the believer today speaking in tongues and/or some other supernatural sign, or is Spirit baptism verified by and coincided with one’s conversion without any need of a particular manifestation except a changed life? While the Scriptures show tongues and other gifts as visible manifestations, and while one cannot argue against the evidence of a changed life, the sustaining litmus test of the

baptism in the Holy Spirit is two-fold: reconciliation and unity among believers (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 2:11-22) and boldness for mission (Acts 2:14ff; Acts 4:8ff, to name a few). A truly Spirit-filled life and a Spirit-filled church are ones that demonstrate the power of God to bring people together, even enemies such as the Jews and Gentiles of old, in Christ's name, as well as the boldness to bear witness to the gospel no matter the cost. These realities are not possible without the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Community of Love

So far, the idea of the church has simply been assumed, but it is time to highlight it here, for the church plays an integral role in Christian formation. The church is the Spirit-empowered church of Jesus Christ, called to represent the kingdom of God in the world. Its members do this through learning how to be a community of love together. There are four directions toward which Christian love is directed—God, self, neighbor and one another.

The church is first and foremost a community of worship, a community in love with God. In response to a lawyer's question about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt. 22:37-38). Because of who God is and what God in Christ has done (1 Chron. 16:8-36; I Jn. 4:10; Rev. 4:11), we worship God and no other as our "reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1, KJV). When we worship God, we engage in the very thing we were created for, and thus move toward our healing and salvation.

The second greatest commandment from the mouth of Jesus was, "You shall love your neighbor

as yourself” (Mt. 25:39). While the focus here is on the meaning of loving our neighbor, the implication to love oneself is clear. It is true that we are sinners, and as such, we are broken, depraved, and unworthy to enjoy the holy presence of God. But there is ultimately no room for self-deprecation and self-hatred; “for God so loved the world (read: us) that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). Indeed, it is part of our formation to learn how to love ourselves, imperfections and all. The passage implies that if we do not love ourselves, then we cannot love our neighbor.

“And who is my neighbor?” another lawyer asked in Lk. 10:29. Jesus’ answer, the now famous story of the “Good Samaritan,” defies easy analysis; but through the story, we can see that our neighbor is anyone—anyone!—in need. This means that compassion and justice are not conditional, but are in fact higher laws that transcend racial, cultural, political, and social divides.

Furthermore, we are good neighbors when we help others, as seen in Jesus’ question at the end to the lawyer: “Which of these . . . do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers” (v. 36)? “Neighbor” then refers both to the one being helped and the one helping; the key in understanding Jesus’ teaching here is the call to extend our sacrificial love, not just to those who look and think like us, but to all. To love our neighbor (and to love as neighbor) is the second greatest commandment (Mt. 22:39).

Finally, members of the church of Christ love one another, demonstrating God’s power to reconcile and unite people who would otherwise be at enmity. The church is the place where

women and men, black white and brown, rich and poor, young and old, and people with differing social and political affiliations, gather together in the equalizing power of the gospel (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-22). By this kind of love—love for another in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit—the world will know that we are Christ’s disciples (Jn. 13:35).

The church then is called to be the visible community of the redeemed in Christ loving God, loving self, loving neighbor, and loving one another. To participate in the building up of this kind of community is an integral part of our spiritual formation.

Priesthood and Prophethood of all Believers

The whole community of love—the church—is called to participate in the work of God in the world. If the key word above was *love*, then the key word here is *whole*. The ministry of the church cannot be relegated to professionals and specialists; it is in fact the work of the church in unity according to the gifts of the Spirit distributed to the Body. Indeed, the work of the ministry depends on the priesthood and prophethood of all believers.

Historically, as we know, this truth helped to define the Protestant Reformation as believers in the 16th century reacted to abuses of power among the clergy. But more importantly, this truth reflects the biblical teaching that the whole people of God in their togetherness, not just a few with the right degrees and charismatic personalities, represent God and do God’s bidding in the world. This is perhaps best articulated in I Peter 2:9, where it says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty

acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” These words of the apostle Peter were not addressed to clergy, but to all the redeemed in Christ.

This means that every believer has a part to play in the church’s mediating role in the world. As a priesthood, every believer is called to bring human concerns to God in prayer and intercession, while administering Christ’s care to the lost, the broken, the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. As a “prophethood,” every believer is called to bring God’s transforming word to bear not only upon the shortcomings of the church, but also upon the world’s injustices and cruelties.

Practically speaking, the truth of the priesthood and prophethood of all believers certainly does not mean for everyone to become professional ministers. On the contrary, it means to bear witness to the gospel where ever we are as doctors, lawyers, teachers, secretaries, farmworkers, janitors, or any other type profession. Only certain people are called to be professional ministers, whose job is in part to equip others in the work of the gospel. As members of the community of priests and prophets, each of us must discover our spiritual gift-set and use it to participate in the building up of the church and the transformation of the world. In the words of the apostle Paul:

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness (Rom. 12:3-8).

Doing Theology

Theology is finally a verb. It is about doing the will of God in the world, not just thinking, hearing or talking about it (Jms. 1:22). Having said this, however, it is not “either/or,” but rather “both/and.” As followers of Christ, we must reflect (and reflect deeply) upon the things of God, as well as act upon them. Furthermore, our actions should inform our theological reflection just as much as our theological reflection should inform our actions. This mutually-benefitting process between action and reflection is called “praxis.” Praxis is, as a famous educator defined it, “action and reflection upon the world in order to transform it.” This is the true nature of theology.

This approach is in contrast to the traditional idea that we spend a number of years getting our theological doctrines straight and then spend the rest of our lives applying them in real life. For practicing the faith is not what we do after theology; it is an integral part of our theology (which is why this section is included in a paper on “theological foundations”). Praxis, or doing theology, means that we are always engaged in reflection and action, because real life poses complex situations that compel us to make relevant our understanding of God and God’s will, as well as our practice of the church in mission. To be theologically-informed practitioners and practicing theologians should be the ultimate goal of Christian formation.

With the Bible as our final authority, we bear witness to the kingdom of God; we declare that Jesus Christ is Lord; we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to become a community of God’s reconciling and uniting love; we participate in God’s mission together, doing the work of the ministry according to the gifts given to each of us; and we engage in theological

praxis—reflecting and acting, thinking and doing—in order to be faithful, effective, and relevant gospel-bearers for the sake of the world.

DRAFT

Contextualization: Drinking from our own Cups
Paul Joshua

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889 -1929) was an Indian mystic who followed Jesus Christ ardently and shared the gospel effectively. When on a train journey Sundar Singh observed, at a station, a Brahmin (high caste) man almost faint due to the intense heat of summer. The Station Master ran to him with a cup of water but surprisingly he refused to drink it. Soon, another man brought him water in the Brahmin's own brass cup. He drank it immediately and was refreshed. Struck by this Sundar Singh learnt an important lesson embedded in this incident. The water that was given in the first cup was no different than the water in the second. What was most decisive for the Brahmin was the cup in which it was administered. The Brahmin was happy to receive the water as long as it was from his cup. That water, Sundar Singh reflected, was like the gospel, in fact Sundar Singh called the gospel the 'water of life'. For Indians to gladly receive the gospel and be made alive by it, this 'water of life' was to be given, not in a European cup, but in an Indian cup, only then would they accept it and be transformed by it. Sundar Singh learnt a valuable lesson and went on to use and teach this theological and missiological principle: 'the water of life in an Indian cup.' Sundar Singh donned the ascetic's saffron robes and engaged in an itinerant preaching ministry, communicating to the people through simple and easy to understand parables drawn from everyday life. Reminiscent of an Indian sage and indeed, not too dissimilar from his Master Jesus himself, Sundar Singh's ministry proved to be rather appealing to his Indian audiences and attracted many to Jesus.

The creative accomplishments of people like Sundar Singh and others from around the world gave rise to the coining of terms like Contextual Theology, Contextualization,

Indigenisation, Inculturation, Translation, Incarnation and so on. Efforts followers of Christ took to understand and communicate the gospel in a manner that local people could really understand, appreciate and even adopt were so diverse that they really required a range of terms to describe them. Clearly each of them have their own merits and shortcomings. However, while they may represent a colourful spectrum of activities it is all directed toward thinking of and speaking about the gospel in the language of the people so as to facilitate a profound understanding and acceptance of and living by the gospel with as little difficulty as possible. Or to employ Sundar Singh's metaphor, it is about serving the water of life in people's own cups. Put in a formal way, contextual theology has been defined as, "a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the gospel, the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologising and the social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation."²

Theological Rationale

It is important to recognise that contextualisation/translation is not so much a luxury that the church can entertain, after it has taken care of its core activity and/or when it so desires. On the contrary it is to be seen as a theological necessity, perhaps even an imperative. There are two basic theological assumptions behind that recognition. The first is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for the entire world and it is not restricted to any one group of people. As we read in John 3:16 "God so loved the world". The God of the Bible is a God of all nations. This was clearly revealed to Abraham, and even before his choosing to people like Noah. The gospel is therefore

² Stephan Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1992), p.1

meant for all human societies and peoples. A second assumption is that people from different cultural, ethnic, linguistic backgrounds think of faith in God, religion and the supernatural in differing ways. In fact cultures around the world have a variety of ways in which they grasp and engage with reality as a whole. In order to enable people from around the world grasp the depths of the gospel one will need to translate it into their heart, thought, ritual, cultural and spoken languages. They will need to hear the gospel in their own language. Indeed Jesus Christ himself did not shout out the gospel from heaven using a cosmic megaphone and employing a universal language. On the contrary, as John 1: 14 says, he became flesh. As a real human being he lived and worked with his fellow citizens demonstrating to them through his purposeful life, liberative actions and revolutionary teachings what the kingdom of God was all about, what God sincerely desired for his people. Jesus revealed God from within his particular Jewish context to his particular Jewish audience. Indeed, as the four gospels demonstrate Jesus literally incarnated the gospel.

This principle was followed by the early church as well as it spread across to new geographical areas. While Jewish Christians continued with their Jewish rituals and practices in their worship of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, Gentile Christians, after a struggle with the Judaisers, and strongly supported by Paul in that tussle, began to practice their Gentile Christianity. They did not adhere, for example, to Jewish circumcision and dietary laws. They developed an expression of the faith from within their own unique contexts, which was then attractive to their compatriots. One may recognise that the Apostle Paul also adopted such approaches to those he shared the gospel with. The incident found in Acts 17 is one significant case in point. The

scriptures attest that the early church was a contextually sensitive church. They created a church that among other things took care of the poor and needy, developed multicultural communities and facilitated the flowering of a variety of discipleship models. Surely they provide an example for us in the 21st century.

Strategic Rationale

Alongside such a scriptural and internally positive motivation for contextualisation one also needs to recognise that negative perceptions about Christianity exist, which therefore calls for a mature response. This may be seen as the external and strategic rationale for contextualization. In many parts of the world Christianity is seen as a foreign religion that the white man brought as he went around the world on his colonial and imperial campaigns. Christianity is seen in a very negative light and is perceived as something that robs Christians of their indigenous cultures and ways of life. For many in India, for example, to be a Christian is seen as tantamount to washing ones hands off Indian culture and tradition and to look to the west in matters of faith, food and fashion.

One way in which that is borne out was brought home to me recently when I learnt about the results of a survey that was done among non-Christians which enquired about obstacles hindering them from coming to church. Surprisingly their responses had little to do with who Jesus was and the nature of his claims. But rather they revolved around the cultural practices of the Christians in the church building, which for the most part were inherited from western missionaries. The fact that Christians wore shoes in the church; the way they disrespectfully left

the Bible lying on the ground, the western oriented patterns, the English music and songs used in the church, and so on and so forth were the reasons many did not feel comfortable with this kind of religion. For them even if as basic a practice as worship was so moulded by the west, then what hope for the rest of that religion? What would it do, for example, to their much loved and respected cultural traditions that were practiced for centuries? It spelt to me that in many cases it is our internal Christian practices and patterns that are more of a hindrance than the gospel of Jesus Christ itself. It was not so much that non-Christians were uninterested in Jesus Christ as much as they were repelled by the western patterns and ways of life that some Christians adopted. This is rather telling an indictment that the very Christianity that is practiced in many parts of the world is itself a hindrance to people becoming followers of Christ. In such contexts we will need to see that contextualization works at infusing our faith and its practices with a contextual and cultural sensitivity and integrity.

Shapes of Contextualisation

Clearly then we need to attend to both the internal theological and external strategic rationale for contextualization, with a view to incarnate the faith into given contexts of the world. Following the paradigmatic example of the first incarnation of the Son of God into a human being in the person of Jesus Christ, we will need to seek to incarnate Jesus into our diverse cultural contexts. Jesus will need to speak the language of our people; he will need to answer the questions that arise from our contexts. Such a process will result in the gospel, that is Jesus Christ, becoming and being seen as good news for the Peruvians as Peruvians, the Germans as Germans, the Zambians as Zambians, the Chinese as Chinese and so on.

Over the years this process of contextualization has been expressed in anything from formal theology that employs local thought patterns and philosophies as conversations partners, to expressing worship by an adaptation of local music, rituals and addressing local concerns, to writing meaningful songs and producing literature in the vernacular that draw on local imagery, to producing art that reflects on the God of the Bible as he would be seen from the context of the artist, to establishing local churches that follow culturally sensitive patterns of worship and discipleship and are of the soil in every way possible. Indeed such a process needs to continue and perhaps even take on a fresh urgency in a day when we face, among others, the challenge of cultural and economic globalization. A critical component of such a process will be the need to shape models of discipleship that are integral / holistic and attend to socio-economic and environmental issues just as it does to spiritual ones. It is only when we are able to convince people by our word and action that God in Jesus cares for life before death just as he does for life after death will the gospel become good news for the vast majority of the world's populations. Another critical component of such a process of contextualization will continue to be the translation of the scriptures into the vernacular. Translating the scriptures facilitates the rooting of the gospel into given cultures. Mother tongue scriptures affirm that God speaks all languages and seeks to reach every people in their heart language - language that also confirms and affirms their self-identity as a people. Mother tongue scriptures will then help peoples from around the world to contribute, on the basis of their own culture, to the global theological agenda.

Miles to Go

Contextualisation is an urgent challenge that we need to fervently pray about, wisely think through and collaboratively work at for the sake of the spread of the gospel around the world. While, as noted, both internal theological reasons as well as external strategic reasons provide the rationale for such a pursuit, we will also do well to learn from our forebears, who have gone ahead of us and who may serve as good examples for our contemporary needs. Our fellow brothers and sisters from around the world are also a priceless resource for us. A global exchange of experiences, learning and models will be valuable asset in sharpening our approaches to living the faith with cultural and contextual integrity. In a day and age when there are many challenges and obstacles that lie in the path of those who are truly attracted by Christ yet perhaps put off by the foreignness of our faith practices, or by the socio-economic and environmental injustice that some forms of Christianity perpetuate let us be biblically sound, historically aware and contextually sensitive followers of Christ who offer no offence, save the offence of the cross, to people who are thirsty for the water of Life, the gospel of Jesus Christ, in their own cups.

Educating for life: educational philosophy
Ruth Padilla DeBorst

Day after day it was the same: the teacher wrote things on the board and the children copied it all down in their notebooks. Week after week it was the same: the children were given questions they were expected to answer with all the content they had copied from the board. Month after month it was the same: the children studied the answers they had written with the content they had copied from the board in order to transcribe that very content in response to the questions they would be given in the test. Needless to say, we did not leave our kids in that school for too long!

Because learning is so much more than memorizing and repeating content! This section of the manual intends to lay out the educational philosophy of this Christian Formation curriculum, i.e. how we believe people learn and what we believe education is for. This is not in any way a thorough and exhaustive treatise on educational philosophy, a rich and ever-evolving field. We are simply offering a broad stroke orientation to the educational approach with which this curriculum has been designed and will best be used. We first explore two contrasting models of education and the underlying assumptions about human beings upon which these models are built. We then consider the exemplary teaching model of Jesus, both in terms of process and of purpose. We conclude by spelling out some pedagogical principles and practical recommendations for facilitators of this formation process.

Two contrasting models of education

Sadly, our children's educational experience is not uncommon. In grade schools, high schools, colleges, seminaries and universities, students are often considered little more than receptors of the knowledge delivered by someone assumed to be an expert in the subject. And progress is measured by the student's capacity to feed back what they have received. Back in the 1970s, Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, termed "banking" this style of education in which students passively receive and mechanically repeat the very same content while their attitudes, capacities, actions, social interaction, and political action remain unaffected. This model of education guarantees the maintenance of the status quo because it is disengaged from the real life experience of the learner.

Building on the work of philosophers and educators through the ages, Freire spearheaded a contrasting educational model in which education is conceived as a 'consciousness raising' process, one in which students actively engage, bringing to bear their experience and pre-existing knowledge in a constant back and forth between that experience and knowledge and the new content brought in by the educator. In this model, students are respected as active proponents and participants, and the educator's role is considered to be less that of the know-it-all expert and more that of a facilitator of the learning-provoking interaction. The value of expert knowledge is not disregarded, but it is brought in when called for and in appropriate dialogue with the lived experience of the learners who are capable actors rather than passive recipients in the learning process. Learning occurs, then, when knowledge/content is set in

dialogue with life/experience, in other words, through praxis. Progress in this model is measured by the capacity of the learner to act upon the new knowledge in ways that transform his or her reality. Far from an instrument of oppression and maintenance of unjust structures and relationships, education contributes to people gaining critical awareness of their condition and joining forces to create the necessary social and political change.

The Master Teacher

A couple thousand years before Freire, another master teacher employed quite a similar method. When his disciples came to him with questions, or his adversaries confronted him, he responded with illustrations, stories and, often, with further questions. He did not offer long-winded lectures nor canned responses. Instead, he respected their inherent value, regardless of their social status, and invited his listeners and followers to dig deeper, to think for themselves, to establish connections between their previous knowledge, his teaching and their every-day lives. His objective was not merely to fill his followers' heads with intriguing, new ideas –although he did challenge them with new ways of looking at things-- but to nourish in them a new way of life, with renewed relations. He did not measure progress in their learning by the acquisition of information or the ability to repeat it: in fact, this teacher outright rejected the vain repetition of religious formulae. Faithful discipleship, for this teacher, was evidenced by increased love, compassion, a thirst for justice, and responsible action in favor of others, and particularly of those society deemed most lowly, like women, children, foreigners, and people with contagious diseases. These attitudes, values and actions were not merely topics in this teacher's syllabus. Instead, he incarnated, modeled, and lived them out, teaching by word and example, suffering

rejection, and being sentenced to death because of his radical and prophetic criticism of all that deprived people of full life.

The impact of this simple carpenter's teaching was soon felt far beyond the dusty roads of his small and geo-politically insignificant corner of the world. And the testimony of those who had walked with Jesus consisted of far more than propositional truths about God, humankind, sin, redemption and other such topics typically categorized as religious or theological. What grew out of Jesus' life and teaching was an alternative community empowered by God's Spirit to continue his ministry: healing, teaching, confronting exclusionary religious practices, leading people to recognize God's claim on their lives, practicing equalizing social and economic practices. Jesus' teaching had affected their individual and corporate lives and fashioned them into active citizens of a kingdom that far transcended the borders of Jewish nationalism and Roman imperial claims and into agents of God's love and justice in the world.

Facilitating learning

As you will discover in your role as a CETI facilitator, this curriculum is designed within the educational philosophy presented above. Within that framework, the following pedagogical principles and practical recommendations can contribute to all participants making the most of the CETI experience.

1. *The facilitator's role is precisely that, to facilitate.* Pose questions. Promote dialogue.

Welcome creativity. Open up space for participants to inquire and discover

together, to build bridges between each other and between their experience and the content at hand. Lead the group in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in that process. You are not searching for any one perfect and never changing answer: you are seeking to instill in the students a thirst for continuous learning.

2. We are all learners. Facilitator and students, we are all on a journey towards deeper understanding and more faithful following of Jesus. Remain humble and willing to be challenged even by the most unexpected person in your group. Do not strive to know it all or to prove your knowledge to anyone. Create an atmosphere in which everyone is free to explore, to voice their perspectives, and to co-create scenarios born from the learning process.
3. True learning involves not only content assimilated cognitively into minds but also attitudes, capacities, skills and commitments. Do not aim at hearing back from students what you told them or they read. Expect and demand full orbed, integral engagement in the educational process so that not only minds but also hearts and hands are put to work.
4. Lasting learning demands change, and change does not come painlessly. Expect discomfort, even conflict, and resistance from inside and out as established attitudes, and patterns of behaviors are questioned and shaken. Pray with and for your students: that God's Spirit may grant you all hearts of flesh, sensitive to the

Spirit's bidding.

5. Knowledge is action. Learning is only such once it works itself into concrete steps in light of the concepts explored. Invite people to share these steps, their progress along the way, and the new questions that arise from that transformational practice.

Educating for life

People, young and old, here, there and everywhere are constantly being told what life is for, how they should live, and whose interests they should seek in order to survive and thrive in today's competitive consumer society. Personal success regardless of the means to achieve it, security even if at the point of a gun, ever-increasing purchasing power although great majorities do not have enough to eat, all these are considered values worth living –and killing for. And often, educational systems serve as accomplices for this state of affairs.

In the beginning, God created a world of abundance with life-sustaining diversity. Jesus contrasted the work of thieves, who come to lie, destroy and kill, with his mission of granting life, and life in abundance. His life and teaching, death, resurrection, and current reign disturb and denounce the forces that conspire against that full life and graphically portray what right relations look like with God, with neighbors and with the rest of creation. His was an education for full life for all people.

So should be ours: education that invites people to live out their full potential as beings created in the image of the God-who-is community, as beings created by and for community. Not simply minds to be filled, or cogs in a production machinery but witnesses and agents of God's life-giving agenda.

DRAFT