I’ve been asked to share with you an alternative model to the traditional, twenty-first century, Western model of theological education. We have entitled our model, “Church-Based Theological Education.” The term emerged into importance in our own vocabulary about four years ago at a conference in New Haven, Connecticut, at the Overseas Ministry Study Center (OMSC). Ted Ward asked me to assist him in a seminar at OMSC, which turned out to be a gathering of many lay leaders from around the world, who were involved in theological education renewal of one form or another. The seminar was entitled “Alternatives in Theological Education: Reconciling the Differences.” The consensus in regard to one particular movement—Theological Education by Extension (TEE)—exemplified the spirit of the entire seminar. It was generally assumed that TEE was on the decline, and in many places, rather than becoming the best of both worlds by supplying organized theological study in an in-service context, it actually became the worst of both worlds, marked by undisciplined, unaccountable study and poor mentoring of educational experiences. It was also very clear, at least from my observations of the discussions, that most were saddened by the potential failure of TEE to establish a new and viable theological educational model for the next century, in light of its promising beginning and its potential for bringing about badly needed reform of the Western model, especially as applied in the Two-Thirds World a contemporary case of putting new wine in old wineskins.

In one sense it is legitimate for me to call our model an alternative, because we are trying to create a model that will serve the church well in the next century. We are working with TEE groups and theological seminaries around the world in conjunction with our church-based training programs, building an effective network of church-based leadership training programs. Yet in reality, I am not up here only to share an alternative model with you but an alternative paradigm, for that is our model. It is my belief that most theological education renewal in the last few decades has centered around the adaptation and adjustment of an old paradigm, a paradigm that is likely to significantly impede the creation of radical new forms for the emerging needs of the twenty-first century. Let me be very clear about one point at this juncture, however. In calling for
the creation of a new paradigm for theological education, I am not at all calling for us to abandon the concept of seminary, a concept that, in one form or another, has been with us all through the centuries. Nor am I calling for elevating one form of education—nonformal—over the other two identifiable forms—formal and informal. I believe we need seminaries and have always believed we need seminaries. But the form they take, the paradigm in which they reside, is another matter altogether. Concerning this matter, I am convinced that our twentieth-century, institutional seminary model reflects the paradigm of the educational institutions of contemporary culture and are carriers of their values and often their diseases.

Painting the broad strokes of a new paradigm for theological education is not a small task and should not be approached naively or in isolation from either the church or the existing academy. On the other hand, it will not necessarily be arrived at from within, for large institutions rarely renew themselves in significant ways and almost never voluntarily shift to an entirely new paradigm. These broad strokes must draw upon the Scriptures and the history of theological education and be painted with a keen eye for the kind of leaders that are needed to lead the church in the next century. In building a new paradigm, we must understand something of the complexity of the problem or we will run the risk of repeating the TEE experiment, reducing our discussion to the pragmatics of training those who cannot come to our seminaries and rehashing the age-old knowing/doing problem. It simply is not enough to slightly rearrange Schierlmacher’s fourfold curriculum design, polishing it with contemporary titles. Nor is it enough to extend our classrooms into the evening or into the four walls of a church. Often these discussions are driven more by financial than philosophical concerns.

I believe Jonathan Chao, one of the great theological education minds of the Two-Thirds World, was right when he penned the following words as an expansion to the Lausanne Covenant in 1974:

“It is not possible to ‘improve theological education’ as suggested by the covenant, in isolation from its ministerial context. Rather, a complete, integrated approach to the development of indigenous leadership within the overall context of the church and her ministry must be undertaken.... A critical and historical analysis of the traditional missionary model of ministry exported from the West shows that it is built on the administrative structure reflecting the Roman mentality rather than on a functional structure of service as found in the New Testament.... This kind of rethinking, although by no means new, implies that any attempt to ‘improve’ the present form of theological education is not enough. What we need is not renovation, but innovation. The whole philosophy and structure of theological
education has to be completely reshaped…. If we reshape the ministry and restructure leadership training along biblical lines in the Third World, I believe that we will see the release of a spiritual dynamic in the churches that could produce a great awakening for world evangelisation."1

An implication of Chao’s insights, written almost 20 years ago, is that our Western model, as well, needs the same kind of innovation, not merely renovation. To understand the complexity of creating a new paradigm for North American theological education, we must review two shifts, which occurred in the last two hundred years.

A Critique of the Contemporary Paradigm:

1. It began as a well intended shift from the informal “parsonage seminaries” to formalized in-residence theological institutions.

In the decades preceding the Civil War, the center of theological education moved from “parsonage seminaries” or “log colleges,” which required college or an equivalent education followed by divinity study under the tutelage of a minister, to formal theological institutions called seminaries, which required an in-residence training as preparation for future service. Prior to the formalization of seminaries, churches required divinity study after college. This involved anywhere from a few months to several years, two to three being the norm. The prospective minister supported himself by tutoring or teaching college, thus it was not truly an in-service, church-based model. It was church-based in the sense that a practicing minister mentored him through his studies, but it was not in-service in the sense that he was “in the ministry” with his mentor. The main philosophical reasons given for this radical shift from parsonage seminaries to institutional seminaries were that the formalization of training would do the following:2

2An excellent summary of these reasons was given by Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College, in his address on September 28, 1808, at Andover Academy, entitled “A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Theological Institution in Andover Academy,” September 28, 1808 (Boston, 1808). A summary of the reasons, given in his speech, for formalizing theological education can be found in “The Theological Seminary in the Configuration of American Higher Education: The Ante-Bellum Years,” by Natalie A. Taylor, in History of Education Quarterly, vol. 17, Spring, 1977.
CHURCH-BASED THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

- Give a sufficient length of time to study.
- Provide access to a good library.
- Promote the ability to specialize in an area of study.
- Allow greater devotion of all available time for study and teaching.
- Allow students to profit from other ministerial candidates, forming friendships that could promote harmony in the church.
- Promote unity and one-mindedness in the church by having ministerial students taught sound doctrine in one institution.

Within a little over three decades, over 50 theological seminaries were created in over 17 states. Most of these patterned themselves after the Andover model. There were several historical reasons that contributed to the enormous, early success and speed with which this needed paradigm emerged. Some of the more important reasons included the following:

- The death of several prominent private divinity teachers.
- The demand for ministerial candidates increased greatly because of the revivals of the Second Great Awakening.
- Growing denominational consciousness and theological schisms.
- The growth in population and westward movement.
- The desire to improve theological education and professionalize preparation.
- The tremendous success of the Andover model.

As we seek to establish a new paradigm for theological education, we must take time to carefully reflect on the historical and cultural reasons why our current paradigm emerged. This will ensure that our new models incorporate the lessons of the past in a way that will protect the new models from old mistakes.

2. **Unaware to most, the desire to formalize and professionalize the ministry changed more than the form of theological education; it also changed its very nature. The study of theology shifted from a wisdom to an academic orientation.**

The view of theology shifted from the disposition and orientation of the soul for the purpose of acquiring wisdom, which all men need for useful service of God in whatever capacity in society, to the mastery of academic disciplines—knowledge and information—as preparation for professional ministerial service or teaching in theological institutions. As the professional paradigm began to take shape, several attributes could be found in almost every model:

- Residential education became the accepted standard.
- Schleiermacher’s fourfold theological encyclopedia framed seminary curriculum.

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3Ibid, pp. 18–20.

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• Mastery of academic disciplines became the goal, replacing the acquisition of sapiential learning.
• Pastors as mentors were replaced by professors and scholars.
• The degree system became the accepted standard of measuring preparedness for ministry.

Edward Farley, in Theologia: The Unity and Fragmentation of Theological Education, has done a masterful job of tracing the effect this new professional paradigm had on theological education and how it changed its very nature and goals. The change involved far more than just the change to an institutional form. The orientation of theological study changed from laying a foundation for the lifelong pursuit of wisdom to an intense mastery of academic disciplines. Theology lost its soul, and the pursuit of knowledge replaced the pursuit of wisdom. In building a new paradigm today, our problem is far more complicated than simply creating new cultural forms for doing theological education.

The Emergence of a New Paradigm:

1. Birth pangs indicating the emergence of a new paradigm.

Significant “winds of change” have been blowing in evangelical theological education for almost two decades, putting more emphasis on the local church as the context of theological education and spirituality and godliness as the desired results of the study of theology. This can be seen in the TEE movement, in the extension and satellite school programs inaugurated by virtually all seminaries, in the creating of the D.Min degree, in the emergence of various nonformal theological education programs worldwide, and in the emergence of a significant body of literature critiquing our current paradigm. These changes are consistent with significant cultural and global changes, as we move from an industrial to an information and technological society. Some of the main reasons for these shifts are the following:

• The enormous cost of doing theological education in our Western institutional seminaries.
• Graduates of formal institutions are often ill-equipped or lack the gifts and abilities to truly lead.
• The inability of formal structures to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding Two-Thirds World church.

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4 See the list of works at the end of this article for some of the more prominent critiques.
5 For an insightful treatment of the megashifts taking place in our culture and world as we move from an industrial to a technological society, see PowerShift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century, by Alvin Toffler (Bantam, 1990)
• The discipleship and church renewal movements, with their accompanying literature, are calling the church back to its roots of New Testament form and function and are significantly altering the way the church perceives and practices theological education.
• The emergence of the technological society, in which knowledge and information can no longer be contained and centralized but are rapidly disseminated across geographical boundaries through computer and laser technology.

2. If existing theological institutions are to remain relevant, several megashifts must take place. When these are all pulled together, they become the broad strokes of a “paradigm shift” for theological education.

A strong case can be made for the fact that we are entering a new era of theological education. A new paradigm is emerging. Western, evangelical seminaries must shift to a new paradigm if they expect to be relevant in the twenty-first century. Already many larger churches are training their staff from within. Our Western institutions are generally regarded as ineffective and inappropriate for the Two-Thirds World, where the focus of theological education will most likely reside in the twenty-first century, if for no other reason than sheer numbers. Only those seminaries who are willing to create a new paradigm and make radical decisions are likely to be thriving at the turn of the century. Among our recommendations are the following:
• A shift from traditional, academic-based accrediting systems to church-based assessment procedures, which accommodate formal, non-formal, and informal forms of theological preparation (Collins, 1979).
• A shift in emphasis from the residential, for-service model to a church-based, in-service model of ministry preparation.
• A shift of the foundational training back to local churches, with seminaries assuming a resource role to the churches.

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6This is evidenced by the response of churches and theological institutions to such groups as Leadership Network. The very idea of a summit attended by large church pastors and seminary administrators to discuss needed changes in theological education is an amazing sign in and of itself. Today’s seminary graduate is often too expensive for the rural church, unprepared for the megachurch, and not respected by the university academy. This alone will force radical change.

7Randall Collins has written an extremely important research book entitled The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification (Academic Press, Inc., 1979). I was first introduced to this work in an extensive conversation with Tony Campolo, who insisted I read it before progressing further with our assessment system. At the end of his first chapter “The Myth of Technocracy,” after presenting a mass of research, he concludes, “In sum, shifts in the proportions of skilled and less skilled jobs do not account for the observed increase in the educational level of the American labor force. Economic evidence indicates no clear contribution of education to economic development beyond the provision of mass literacy. Education is often irrelevant to on-the-job productivity, and is sometimes counter productive. Specifically, vocational training seems to be derived primarily from work experience rather than formal school training. The actual performance of schools themselves, the nature of the grading system, and the dominant ethos among students suggest that schooling is very inefficient as a means of training for work skills.”
• A shift of the primary ministry context of professors back to local churches, becoming resource scholars and mentors for training proven and gifted leaders in churches.
• A shift from centralized staff to a decentralized staff, moving them back into strategic local churches around the country.
• A shift away from costly institutional overhead by selling unnecessary properties related to large in-residence programs and focusing on serving as resource centers to area churches.
• A shift from a fragmented curriculum based on Schleiermacher’s four-fold model, to a model more consistent with the unfolding agenda of the Scriptures and current needs of churches (Farley, 1983).
• Specifically, a shift from a curriculum based on systematic theology to a curriculum based on biblical theology and theology in culture, relevant to the belief framework of a given culture (Conn, 1984).
• A shift from an academic, testing course design to a wisdom, problem-posing course design model (Freire, 1984).

These recommendations cannot be treated in this essay; each deserves its own essay, if not its own book, dedicated to assessing its validity. The works cited above, by author and date, are noted at the end of this article and are listed for the purpose of supplying a seminal work as a starting point for thinking about how to go about this shift.

A New Paradigm for a New Millenium: Church-Based Theological Education

We are in the process, with many others throughout North America and the world, of building a church-based paradigm, which we hope will serve churches well. We are one of those churches and provide a prototype and a network for those with similar assessments and needs. From this network has emerged this paradigm. We are calling the new paradigm “church-based theological education.”

8Harvey Conn argues persuasively in Eternal Word, Changing Worlds, 1984, both correcting and building upon the work of Charles Kraft, that our systematic theology categories are far more culturally specific than any of us are aware, and that these categories are not appropriate to many cultures in which we need to enter today. Careful and disciplined biblical theology, together with a thorough examination of the culture in which one ministers, are the needed ingredients in building a relevant “belief framework in culture,” or doing theology in culture in a way which relates to the predominant world views of those being ministered to.
1. The Basic Idea of Church-Based Leadership Development

The term church-based in reference to leadership development is being used in at least two different ways in evangelical circles today, and the meanings operate within two different paradigms. Church-based to some means moving a seminary inside the four walls of a church building while continuing all of the formal and institutional aspects of a traditional seminary. Church-based, as we are using it in this new paradigm, means something quite different. Two key factors enter into our definition of church-based.

First, the idea of seminary is not necessarily antithetical to the idea of church-based. As the American Heritage Dictionary points out, seminary has two specific references:

- A school, especially a theological school for training priests, ministers, or rabbis.
- A place or environment in which something is developed or nurtured.

It is this second and more foundational meaning that is consistent with our definition of church-based leadership development.

Second, the ideals of the core principles found in the letters to the first churches (especially Ephesians) and to church leaders (Timothy and Titus) point to the biblical nature of leadership training being church-based.\(^9\)

- Training took place in the context of the ministry.
- Training was viewed as an entrusting of the ministry to faithful men by faithful men who were doing the work of the ministry.
- Confirming of those trained was fundamentally the responsibility of leaders at a local church level.
- Training of leaders was not viewed as an end in itself or as an entity separate from the church, but it was always understood to be a matter of establishing churches.

The conclusion, then, is that leadership development in the Early Church was church-based at its core. The church-based training of the Early Church was clearly understood as a flexible leadership development strategy rooted in the life and ministry of local churches, in which “gifted men” (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:2) entrusted more and more of the ministry to other faithful men while they themselves remained deeply involved in the process of establishing churches. This type of paradigm we are calling church-based.

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\(^9\) These principles are a condensation of an extensive treatment of Paul’s philosophy in establishing churches and training leaders found in BILD International’s Church-Based Leadership Training Manual and one of the foundational courses entitled Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches.
Based. The extension of the formal theological seminary into the four walls of a church building through various forms of extension would more accurately be referred to as church-housed.

Church-housed: Bringing theological education, which is essentially based in an institutional or organizational model, inside the four walls of a church building. The leaders of local churches are involved only in a token way; instruction is given primarily through a formal mode of lecture; and assessment is made primarily through testing.

Church-based: Building a training strategy that grows out of the life of local churches and takes place in the context of laboring to establish local churches. Leaders are vitally involved in the training process as learners among learners; learning is stimulated through discussion and debate; and assessment is made primarily through articulation of issues and implementation or application of personal or corporate strategies. Those involved in the training process model, entrust, and mentor faithful men who have demonstrated leadership ability and desire.

2. A Church-Based Theological Education Network for the Twenty-First Century:

When applying this concept to the local church, it seems prudent, if not necessary, to develop a broader network to facilitate the continuity and perpetuity of sound leadership training yet still maintain the centrality of the local church. The following is a possible shape of such a network:

- Regional resource hubs in the United States and around the world, which are based in key churches or a localized community of churches, which are capable of housing extensive resources, hosting conferences, and maintaining an on-line computer center.

- Teams of church-based, gifted leaders who share a common vision and understanding of the plan and purpose of God for the Church, supported by their churches to participate in the resource network. They will conduct on-site seminars, assist in establishing churches and training leaders, and oversee the academic development of exceptional leaders who are seeking to become part of this “missionary professor” network.
A core curriculum designed to facilitate ordered learning at the foundational level, conducted by church leaders, taught in a flexible, “problem-posing” style in the context of the local church ministry. Churches in each culture would be challenged to develop specialized courses to address the issues and needs of the church and its outreach in its own culture.

A prudent stewardship strategy for sharing the costs associated with necessary travel, seminars, and regional resource and computer centers.

A publishing house that publishes works that emerge from local churches that are deep in truth and sound doctrine; and resources, journals, and books that emerge from writing guilds sponsored by the network.

A church-based assessment and recognition system, which assesses the level of preparedness, achieved through the network and its participating churches.

At BILD International, we are working to create such a model. The essentials of the model are explained in detail in our 16-page prospectus and accompanying material and more in-depth in our Church-Based Leadership Training Manual and Formal Program Training Manual. The core ingredients of our model include the following:

- A 10-year church-based strategy guide for churches.
- A 30-course core curriculum and lifelong learning update system.
- A comprehensive seminar training network.
- A comprehensive church-based assessment strategy built around a life development portfolio, with a minimum of seven years ministry experience built into the assessment.
- An online computerized resource center.
- A publishing and translation network.
- An international network of resource scholars.

We must break out of that old system, which is killing education and leadership development and design a new paradigm consistent with both biblical principles and the megashifts taking place in our culture.

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10BILD International is one-third of the way through the process of creating a core curriculum for use in church-based leadership training programs. It involves a 30-course core curriculum, built on a problems-posing, project-oriented model. Each course contains a mini-library. Upon completion, the curriculum will constitute over 10,000 pages and over 400 authors, at a total cost, counting field testing, of just over $2,250,000.
• An international network of individual churches and associations of churches.
• An interface strategy with theological seminaries, graduate schools and Bible colleges, and other training organizations.
• The cultivation of church-based regional resource centers, a new generation of seminaries.
• An international network of such resource centers for the purpose of writing, holding councils, and sharing resources.

There is a great crisis in leadership throughout our country today. There is the same crisis in the church as well. One proof? Evangelical churches are looking to professional marketeers for models. The church has traditionally looked to its learning centers for leadership—to seminaries. But today it seems that their leaders are so trapped by institutionalism and enormous financial pressures, that they have little time for innovative leadership. We must break out of that old system, which is killing education and leadership development and design a new paradigm that is consistent with both biblical principles and the megashifts taking place in our culture. Our Western seminaries are enormous resource hubs with a wealth of resources, but they are virtually untapped by the evangelical church because of all the monolithic institutional forms and trappings. These resources need to be shifted to a new paradigm.

Whether this attempt at sketching the broad strokes of a new paradigm comes to fruition is not the main point. Change is on the horizon. It appears to be far more than renovation. We need innovation. We need new paradigms for a new age, which are in tune with the realities of the megashifts from an industrial to a technological society; in tune with the realities of the world becoming a global village, in tune with the needs of the Third World, and in tune with the guiding principles of New Testament ministry.

It has been a privilege to speak to all of you, for education is often best understood by those in your discipline, and new paradigms for theological education are more likely to emerge from your faculty lounge discussions than any other.
Seminal Research Works:

Books:
2. The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University, by Edward Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

Articles:

Additional Material Relevant to This Paper:

1. Surfacing the Issues: Issues and Questions Relevant to Theological Education Reform
2. The Separation of Life and Theology (Doctrine) From the Life and Ministry of the Churches
3. The Life Development Portfolio: A Creative Assessment Alternative

(These and other materials are available from BILD International upon request.)
Huge changes are taking place in the world in which we live. These are truly historic times. In a matter of a few years we have seen a significant upheaval in the political power system that has been in place since World War II. Communism is no longer a dominant worldview. The times are still treacherous, yet significantly altered. Many are arguing that in terms of power a whole new paradigm is emerging. A new kind of war lurks on the horizon—economic wars. Japan and Germany, with their communal capitalism, are poised to dominate as America’s individual capitalism wanes.

Other paradigms are shifting as well. Many feel that we are seeing a paradigm shift of enormous proportion, not unlike the experience of the Enlightenment. David Bosch, in his work Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Missions, points to this growing awareness of being on the verge of a new paradigm.

“Kuhn’s theories have a particular relevance in our own time since, in virtually all disciplines, there is a growing awareness that we live in an era of change from one way of understanding reality to another .... It is abundantly clear that the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War, shows evidence of such a major shift in perceiving reality. Since the seventeenth century the Enlightenment paradigm has reigned supreme in all disciplines, including theology. Today there is a growing sense of disaffection with the Enlightenment and a quest for a new approach in understanding reality. There is, on one hand, a search for a new paradigm; on the other hand, such a new paradigm is already presenting itself.”

One does not have to look long and hard to see that major changes are in the air. Some look at these with great fear and cling to what they know with ever-increasing fervor, trying to avert change by sheer effort in trying to improve what already exists. Others look ahead with a great sense of adventure and anticipation. Most sit still, waiting for whatever is going to happen. The anticipation and the focus on new paradigms is accentuated in this decade more than any other in recent time in part because it is the last decade of the millennium after Christ. What will life in the next century, and the next millennium, actually look like? Time magazine recently published a special issue entitled “Beyond the Year 2000—What to Expect in the Next Millennium.” The subtitle of the first article, “The Cosmic Moment,” reads as follows:

“The Millennium represents the ritual of death and rebirth of history, one thousand-year epoch yielding to another.”

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These realities present a whole new set of opportunities, and challenges, for churches that live and minister during these times. Associations of churches around our country are rising to the challenge and designing strategies, often with very aggressive goals, seeking to maximize the impact of reaching something monumental by the year 2000. In the midst of these elaborate aspirations is an emerging tragedy that is typical of the church throughout the centuries. Rather than thinking ahead, and looking for ways to respond to the new era, which is emerging, the church is almost completely trapped in its institutional way of life, which accompanied the current paradigm of the Enlightenment. We have a unique opportunity to look back in time to the Early Church and forward in time to the world of the twenty-first century. Yet the church seems almost unaware of the current paradigm in which it operates, a paradigm that emerged from the Enlightenment, with its desire to colonize, educate, and civilize, and its accompanying institutional forms. Many of its strategies were appropriate for its day, but are no longer in our present world. Just as the church started out—unaware of its cultural clothing, often interpreting them as angelic robes—so it is going out with the same lack of self-understanding—unaware of the difference between culture and Scripture. It still exists within the colonial paradigm, with extensive plans to burst on the scene of the new millennium with hundreds of thousands of new churches. And these churches, without a clear understanding of their own cultural trappings, are destined to be ineffectual in the next generation, if they survive a single generation.

To understand the complexity of our time with enough clarity to seize this very unique opportunity in a manner that will lay firm and lasting foundations, it is necessary to gain a basic understanding of the cultural engine that the Church used to power the missionary enterprise of the last 200 years. We must begin with a critique of the colonial paradigm of missions.

A Critique of the Waning Colonial Paradigm

1. Taking its cues from the Enlightenment, *civilizing* became the missionary goal, parallel to that of evangelism, and missionary strategies were wedded with the colonizing spirit.

Our current missions era is often referred to as “the colonial era” in missions. Bosch calls it the Enlightenment paradigm. The broad strokes of the paradigm grew from entrepreneurs who saw tremendous open doors for the gospel through the colonizing efforts of their nations and sought to bring the gospel and their cultures to the heathen. It was not uncommon for some of the great pioneers of the colonial missions era to be heard
setting forth such challenges as William Carey when he wrote the following:

“Can we hear that they are without the gospel, without government, without laws, and without the arts and sciences and not exert ourselves to introduce amongst them the sentiments of men and of Christians? Would not the spread of the gospel be the most effectual means of their civilization? Would that not make them useful members of society?”

Harvie Conn goes on to conclude:

“Colonialism was often seen by these early missionaries as the handmaid of the process of civilizing. And it could easily be defined as the grand movement of Europe that promoted the cause of rational behavior in the face of barbarous superstition.”

The logic of their strategy was brilliant, and it worked. Christianity spread throughout the globe. Colonizing was an effective tool. The problem, which was to eventually become the Achilles’ heel of the movement, was not the opportunistic response to cultural opportunity, but the lack of understanding between what was Scripture and what was culture. Without a clear philosophy of ministry based on solid biblical principles, cultural ideas and pragmatic concerns ruled, and churches and institutions were wrapped in Western garb rather than culturally relevant forms—garbs, by the way, that are still wrapped around adult nationals. Concerning this era, Bosch correctly offers the following summary, which captures the essence of the era with remarkable balance.

“The entire Western missionary movement of the past three centuries emerged from the matrix of the Enlightenment. On the one hand, it spawned an attitude of tolerance to all people and a relativistic attitude toward belief of any kind; on the other hand, it gave birth to Western superiority feelings and prejudice…. The Western missionary enterprise of the late eighteenth to the twentieth century remained, in spite of the valid criticism which may be aimed at it, a most remarkable exercise…. Within the absence of the movement Western Christians—in their emerging relationships with people of other cultures—did the only thing that made sense to them—they brought the gospel as they understood it. For this we owe them respect and gratitude.”

Under this Western colonial expansion of the gospel, a whole new paradigm of missions developed. In almost all cases, the missionaries supported the missionary expansion idea, under the belief that the “natives” would be

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2 This statement by Carey was originally taken from The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History (London: SCM, 1965), p. 46, and quoted in Eternal Word Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology and Missions in Triadology, by Harve M. Conn (Zondervan, 1984), p. 35.

3 Conn, p. 36.

better off. They expanded rapidly throughout the world, setting up missionary stations as sort of expansion outposts. The colonialism paradigm developed the three “C’s”:

- Christianity
- Commerce
- Civilization

Bosch quotes John Philip of the London Missionary Society as a typical example. In 1828, Philip wrote this about missionary stations:

“Missionary stations are the most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military posts that a wise government can employ to defend its frontier against the predatory incursions of savage tribes.”

This expansion was then followed by huge maintenance systems, which were needed to complete the colonization:

- Formation of mission societies and agencies.
- Career missionaries over institutions, established in the name of Christianity.
- Educational institutions designed to fully indoctrinate.

One of the great indictments of colonial missions is its consistent failure to establish associations of independent, thriving, and reproducing churches, filled with real leaders, able to think theologically in their own culture. This is logical in light of the colonial paradigm, in which one unwarily mixes the gospel and their own culture. We all live and think in a given cultural milieu and must be taught to think biblically in our own culture. This can only be accomplished by thinking at a principle level. Again, Conn brings the problem clearly into focus:

“Theologizing as an activity of the Third World church was a question missions did not raise. Its struggles were institutional questions—the organization of missions, the relation of missions to the national church, the future structure of the national church. The debate over the indigenous church formula did not cover the question of indigenous theology; its concern was methodological strategy.”

5 Bosch, p. 305.
6 Conn, p. 115
So as you can see, if the missionary enterprise under the era of colonial expansion had seen colonialism as a vehicle for the progress of the gospel and not become identified with its objectives, instead laying careful foundations according to biblical principles and images of ministry, churches would be thriving and multiplying globally, as the missionaries would gradually retreat. Instead, it takes an act of God or a “missionary go home movement” to loosen our ironclad grasp on the churches in other cultures. In building a new model, we must return to the first century before turning afresh to the twenty-first century.

The Emergence of a New Paradigm

Significant “winds of change” have been blowing in missions, just as in theological education, for more than twenty years, putting more emphasis on New Testament models and practices. It is clear that going back to the writings of the Early Church is the foundational source for all ministry principles.

1. Birth pangs indicating the emergence of a new paradigm.

Many signs are on the horizon but two stand out—both point to major changes in how we do missions. The first sign involves Theological Education by Extension (TEE), which is primarily a missions movement. TEE, even with its pragmatic beginnings, spread like wildfire around the world, carrying with it a key message—there is an especially great need for leadership training throughout the Two-Thirds World, and our rigid, colonial-style theological institutions are not doing the job.

The second sign is more indirect but impressive. The detailed and carefully researched books by Conn and Bosch both muster enormous evidence in the direction of a major shift on the horizon and the emergence of a new paradigm. Bosch outlines what he believes are the six major paradigms of church history and claims that the sixth is just about to emerge. The following are Bosch’s six major paradigms:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm
6. The emerging ecumenical paradigm

I have concerns about Bosch’s title for this new emerging paradigm, the ecumenical paradigm, and yet I can easily see why he chose it. We are fast moving towards becoming a global village. We are entering a new technological era, and we have just begun understanding its implications for global power shifts. Economic wars loom on the horizon. And communication is unparalleled since the tower of Babel. The church can talk to one another as never before. The church can strategize together as never before. This is good news and bad news. Yet the idea of working together and strategizing together does produce certain ecumenical tendencies. And the church will move one of two directions: one which tries to build one church and one religion or the other direction which tries
to build Christ’s church according to His administration. Both have implications for this emerging ecumenical paradigm.

What are some of the reasons for the decline of the colonial missions paradigm? Primary reasons include:

- The enormous cost of mission institutions and career missionaries.
- The need to restructure funds for nationals.
- Global restructuring—the colonizing nations are no longer respected.
- Many nations are no longer open to traditional career missionaries.
- Apparent ineffectiveness of many missionaries.
- Lack of ownership by churches in the missionary enterprise itself, instead relying on the expertise of mission agencies.
- Ineffectiveness of Western theological institutions to produce leaders and the resulting desperate cries for national leadership on the mission field.
- Inability of missionaries to turn over their institutions and churches to national leadership.
- Inability to shed the superiority attitude, which has become part of the psyche of so many career missionaries.

2. If existing mission agencies are to remain relevant, several megashifts must take place. When these are pulled together, they become the broad strokes of a new paradigm for missions.

Mission agencies, as we know them today, were created out of the culture of the colonial era and therefore are designed to be effective in a world of colonization and civilization building. But the world has changed. The old forms will no longer work. The existing systems either need to be dismantled, let to die a natural death, or retooled for useful service in a new era. Here are some of our recommendations:

- Critical assessment by agencies of the effectiveness of their missionaries, cutting all but the outstanding ones within one furlough.
- Build the remaining attitudinally-mature missionaries into “itinerant apostolic-like missionary teams” based in “Antioch churches.”
- Build relationships with key “Antioch churches” that will commit to getting involved in mutual strategies designed to assist churches throughout the world to become vital and multiplying, building a network of “itinerant apostolic-like missionary teams”
- Strategically place experienced leaders in a specific field only after a plan has been designed for when the task is expected to be completed.
- Create a plan to dismantle the deputation system.
- Systematically redo colonial terminology and replace with biblical, partnership-oriented terminology.
A New Paradigm for a New Millennium: Church-Based Missions

We are in the midst of a massive paradigm shift in missions that will revolutionize our existing forms, if not completely eliminate them. “Revolutions in thinking,” Conn reminds us “are not created by new information but by new paradigms that allow more information to be fitted more fully and adequately.” In one sense, new paradigms simply emerge as old ones wane through ineffectiveness. It is a natural process of growth. On the other hand, the broad strokes of a paradigm usually emerge or are often helped along by the writings of many who are in a new tradition of reflection. They serve us much like the early sketches of an architect as he conceptualizes a building. The following is an attempt, out of the dialogue of a growing network of mission-minded leaders who are also churchmen, to begin sketching a new paradigm for missions. (In a previous article we clarified our understanding of church-based.)

1. The Idea of Church-Based Missions

When we refer to an enterprise of the church being church-based, we mean that the local church is at the very center of the enterprise. It must have ownership. It must participate significantly at every part of the process. For more than 200 years, the missionary activity of the church has been para-church-based. We are calling for a contemporary paradigm that is truly church-based. The following definitions are offered for your discussion and debate.

- Local church-based: A missions strategy that builds off the centrality of the local church, involving the training, commissioning, and serious partnership with leaders developed in its midst.

- Para-church-based: A missions strategy in which the church is peripheral to the missionary enterprise itself; its role is relegated to an agency recruitment center and a token support base.

The idea of church-based missions has its roots in the first-century churches, as recorded in the book of Acts. From this narrative a core set of guiding principles are identified, which can serve us in sketching a new paradigm. The ideas of this core set of principles clearly point to the biblical nature of the missionary enterprise being church-based.

- Missionaries who went out to do missionary activity were the most experienced leaders who knew how to establish churches (Acts 13:1–4).
- Their gifts were confirmed by the leaders with whom they served, and they were commended to a specific work. They reported back to their sending church concerning that work (Acts 14:25–28).
- The church continued to minister to Paul and his team in very direct ways, such as sending finances as well as people to assist him (Phil. 1:3–6; 4:10–18).

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7 Conn, p. 54
Today, the old paradigm is being stretched to limits previously considered unreachable. It is an unusually complex network of agencies, missionaries, and church-growth analysts who have created a mammoth network and a few important goals focused on the year AD 2000. The network is full of many good and creative ideas, and the gospel has been furthered. Yet, I believe that under careful analysis it can be convincingly demonstrated that this movement is jump-starting the old colonial paradigm and attempting to breathe new life into its old, dying forms. Reality is: Rather than finishing the task by the year 2000 in some sort of grand culmination of the 200 years of colonial missionary activity, we are instead looking at an enormous investment of time, talent, and resources in what will probably go down in church history as a last-ditch effort by misguided zealots who did great harm to the genuine progress of the gospel worldwide by operating in the colonial paradigm.

2. A Church-Based Missions Network for the Twenty-First Century

When applying this concept to the local church, it seems vital to develop a broader network of churches and leaders, a network that desires to build on the biblical guidelines as well as design creative models for the twenty-first century.

• A network of “Antioch churches” committed to raising up leaders, commending them out to the task of missions, and fully participating with the leaders they commission.
• A network of skilled leaders—experienced “itinerant, apostolic-type missionary teams”—raised up and commissioned by churches to participate in establishing churches in strategic points throughout the world.
• A core curriculum, principle-centered and committed to encouraging the development of a belief framework in culture, which breaks free of the Western categories of theology—built of fresh and solid foundations of biblical theology while being mission driven.
• A network that identifies and empowers key national leaders, and assists them in assuming their rightful place of establishing and leading their churches.
• An interface strategy for cooperating with mission agencies that have a clear vision to break free of the colonial paradigm.

At BILD International we are working to create such a model. The essentials of the model are explained in detail in our 16-page prospectus and accompanying material and more in-depth in our seminar training manuals and in our foundational course—Acts: Keys to the Establishment and Expansion of the First-Century Church. The core ingredients of our model include the following:

• A 30-year strategic intent focusing on the broad strokes of a new church based paradigm.
• A 10-year church-based strategy guide for churches.
• A 30-course core curriculum and lifelong-learning update system.
• A comprehensive seminar training network.
• A comprehensive church-based assessment strategy built around a life development portfolio, with a minimum of seven years ministry experience built into the assessment.
• An online computerized resource center.
• A publishing and translation network.
• An interface strategy with mission agencies that are willing to participate in a new church-based paradigm.
• An international network of resource scholars.
• An international network of individual churches and associations of churches.
• An interface strategy with theological seminaries, graduate schools, and Bible colleges, and other training organizations.
• The cultivation of church-based regional resource centers—a new generation of seminaries.
• An international network of such resource centers for the purpose of writing, holding councils, and sharing resources.

We are living in marvelous times filled with almost unparalleled opportunity. But we must think differently. We must act boldly. And we must be change agents.

What is really at stake? Why are these challenges so important? Are we committed to change for change's sake? Let me close with a couple of illustrations that drive home the point—the need and the urgency of getting on with ministry in the new era.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, there are approximately 3200 missionaries from the United States alone, most living in the better sections of Sao Paulo, which costs approximately $125,000,000 a year. This does not even count the maintenance of the institutions themselves. When discussing this matter with a respected Brazilian leader, he commented, without hesitation, that he was not sure that the Brazilian churches would be affected in any negative way if 80 percent of the missionaries were sent home tomorrow. Now I'm not for throwing $100,000,000 at the Brazilian churches, but can you imagine what they could do with $100,000,000 a year to help fund a well-designed strategy for establishing their existing churches and training leaders?

The second illustration comes in the form of a challenge from Jonathan Chao, in an article he wrote more than fifteen years ago. Although he was primarily speaking about Western theological education, it applies to missions as well.
“A critical and historical analysis of the traditional missionary model of ministry exported from the West shows that it is built on the administrative structure reflecting the Roman mentality rather than on a functional structure of service as found in the New Testament…. This kind of rethinking, although by no means new, implies that any attempt to “improve” the present form of theological education is not enough. What we need is not renovation, but innovation. The whole philosophy and structure of theological education has to be completely reshaped…. If we reshape the ministry and restructure leadership training along biblical lines in the Third World, I believe that we will see the release of a spiritual dynamic in the churches that could produce a great awakening for world evangelization.”

Resources:


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NEW PARADIGMS FOR THE POST-MODERN CHURCH

Jeff Reed
President, LearnCorp
Presented at 1995 Christian School Leadership Summit
Colorado Springs, Colorado
July 28, 1995

Before beginning to deal with the issues of the paradigmatic changes in the church and in the culture in which we live, changes which affect every facet of life, and our ministry models, I would like to give a brief account of how this paper came about. This is actually the fourth in a series of six paradigm papers on the church and its mission in the world, but was not originally part of the overall design.¹ For over twenty years I have been involved in renewal in theological education and missions - renewal which takes very seriously the centrality of the local church. Yet parallel to that work has been an ongoing effort to address the fragmented Christian education approach of the church in our generation, and to build an effective model which truly integrates the school, the home and the church.

About two years ago, Alan Pue, now Vice President of School Masters, asked me to consider constructing a framework for a wisdom-based Christian education paradigm based upon some extensive biblical theology work that I had done in the Hebrew wisdom literature, and which we had begun using with fathers and churches. Alan had worked with our church-based theological education paradigm in BILD-International, and saw tremendous potential for a parallel church-based paradigm for primary and secondary Christian education. A year later I met with Alan and Mickey Bowden and presented the core elements of the model. We all became excited about the implications of a church-based, wisdom-based education

¹ The first paper, Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm, was delivered almost three years ago at the annual conference for the North American Professors for Christian Education (NAPCE). It was addressed mostly to Christian education professors and academic deans of graduate schools of theology, and is in one sense seminal to the entire discussion of the five articles. It calls the church to a whole new educational paradigm for educating its leaders. The companion to this paper, Church-Based Christian Education: Creating a New Paradigm - Part II: Adulthood, will be completed in the spring of 1996. The three together form a fairly complete treatise toward a comprehensive church-based Christian education paradigm. The next two were delivered at BILD-International’s annual conferences, in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The first, Church-Based Missions: Creating a New Paradigm, deals with sweeping changes occurring in missions, in breaking free from the residual effects of the colonial missions model, and the second, Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm deals with the need to do theology afresh in culture, building upon a biblical theology base. The final paper in the paradigms for the modern church series, entitled Church-Based Hermeneutics: Creating a New Paradigm, in process as well, will deal with post-modern hermeneutical issues, and implications of electronic publishing on the life of the church. All place the local church at the center of the discussion. These can be ordered from LearnCorp, 1835 Meadow Glen Rd., Ames, IA 50014. Phone: 515-292-6810/Fax: 515-292-1933.
paradigm. That time has led to a series of discussions which we hope will lead to a bold venture involving a network of prototype schools, churches and parents in a ten year adventure of building church-based Christian education models with this paradigmatic framework.

The concepts and model I’m about to share with you are not merely theoretical issues to me. They grow out of approximately 2,400 hours of study and teaching on the wisdom literature in the context of our church and its ministry apprenticeship training program, and in addition, are the framework, in elementary form, which guided Nancy and me in the raising of our two children. Anna, who is now married, is fully involved in the life of the church; my son-in-law George is with me at this conference. Anna and George lead the junior high youth ministry in our church, and George is in his second year of our church-based ministry apprenticeship. Jonathan, 17, is a student leader in our senior high youth ministry, founder of a Christian group, Revival, on his High School campus, and involved in a one year “boot camp” in preparation for our ministry apprenticeship program. I mention these facts only to emphasize the reality that the paradigmatic ideas I am about to share with you, though at times broad, theoretical and even technical, are highly practical when implemented; very effective if fully followed; and intensely personal; as they are the foundations upon which we have built our family, and the paideia of our local church.

I am convinced that one of the greatest needs today, in churches in our country and around the world, is to deal aggressively, and comprehensively, with the problem of the education, moral development and faith transmission of our children. And, that in light of the paradigmatic shifts being swept in with the emergence of a new technological society, we must seize this historic moment, to examine afresh the forms, the paradigms, if you will, of how we do Christian education today. Our contemporary Christian education model is fragmented - the church, the school and the home often on different agendas. The church often lacks a comprehensive plan, opting instead for a fragmented “Sunday school” system, purchasing market-driven fluff from the Sunday school publishing industry. Christian schools often find themselves in an uninterested relationship with churches, if not adversarial, and I might add, they often times deserve it. And parents, with little understanding of their central role in the paideia of their children, abdicate most of their responsibility to the church, the Christian school, or both, and therefore do not provide the overarching stability and guidance needed to span any successful education process.

The good news is that there seems to be a renewed vision for the Christian education of our children over the last decade. I have seen it in churches around the country, and the world for that matter. There is clearly a renewed interest in private schools, and especially Christian schools, as our
national public education system hastens toward collapse. The continued growth of the home-schooling movement is also a positive sign. It forces the question of the role of parents in Christian education. Now is an opportune time, as opportune a time as the church has possibly seen in several hundred years, (if one accepts the thesis that we are now moving into a post-modern era), for a comprehensive evaluation of the whole concept of Christian education and an attempt at framing in a new paradigm - one which truly integrates the home, the church and the school. But before attempting to tackle the boundaries of a new Christian education paradigm, we need to gain a sense of the sweeping changes which are reshaping education of every sort, changes which are truly paradigmatic in scope, changes which are inevitable.

Paradigm Shifts in Education

Although it has become a little trendy, the concept of paradigm is rooted in some very significant literature, which is crucial to understanding the history of the church, and how our ministry models are affected by the cultural realities and historical eras in which we live, work and minister. A paradigm is a more comprehensive idea than a model, since a paradigm can contain numerous working models. The word paradigm comes from the Greek word paradiigma, which means example, model, pattern. Kuhn defines paradigm as “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community.” Barker defines paradigms as follows:

A paradigm is a set of rules and regulations (written or unwritten) that does two things: (1) it establishes or defines boundaries; and (2) it tells you how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful.

In research today, a paradigm is understood as the acceptable boundaries of our ministry models. In this sense then, the concept of paradigm is broader

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2 I am not at all impressed with the alarmist, unscholarly and often McCarthy type critiques of our national public school system set forth by the extreme religious right. For an objective and mature contemporary assessment of the probable terminal nature of our system see the following works: Public Education: An Autopsy, by Myron Lieberman (Harvard, 1993), Inside American Education: The Decline, the Deception, The Dogmas, by Thomas Sowell, (Free Press, 1993), Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong: Moral Literacy and the Case for Character Education, by William Kilpatrick (Simon & Schuster, 1992), and The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children, by William J. Bennett (Simon & Schuster, 1992).


4 Kuhn, p. 75.

5 Barker, p. 32.
than the concept of model, in fact, there may be several models all existing within the same boundaries.

What does our education paradigm look like today? It includes grade levels, tests, grades, degrees, classrooms, etc. We all understand the rules. We all understand the paradigm, although probably no one ever sat us down and explained the education paradigm, its origins and its logic. It is sort of just learned. What is important to realize is that our current paradigm is undergoing radical transformation. Our current formal education paradigm is waning and a new one is beginning to emerge. This process, which happens every several hundred years, usually takes only a few decades to take place. If this is true, we are living in very extraordinary times.

Schools will need to become lifelong learning centers to fit the new educational needs of a changing society.

One of the best discussions of the magnitude of these cultural shifts and their implications for education is set forth by Alan M. Thomas in his book Beyond Education: A New Perspective on Society’s Management of Learning. Thomas develops the thesis that the formal educational system as we know it today arose in tandem with the industrial society, where uniformity was the standard and the need of the times; and that as a management of learning system it is going to need to be restructured, or reengineered, just as we see going on in the corporate world. We need a new management of learning system compatible with the emerging technological society we are entering. Corporations are needing to become learning organizations by necessity of the changing society; and schools will need to become lifelong learning centers to fit the new educational needs of a changing society. Thomas suggests that the shift is inevitable, and that it can be made most smoothly by educational institutions who attach themselves to a learning organization.

A careful perusal of contemporary literature on societal and cultural change, surfaces a general sketch of what this shift from the formal education

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paradigm, developed within the industrial society, to the emerging learning center paradigm of the technological society, would look like. See figure 1. A grasp of these developing patterns is extremely helpful in guiding us in strategically planning our educational forms for the future. These parallels are by no means exhaustive, but rather occur frequently in the literature and the early models.

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waning paradigm</th>
<th>Emerging paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Formal, institutional structures</td>
<td>1. Nonformal, flexible structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. For profit funding</td>
<td>2. For profit discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Testing and degree system</td>
<td>3. Competencies and portfolios</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Institutional authority</td>
<td>5. Partnerships - parents, business</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. For service preparation dominant</td>
<td>6. In service preparation idealized</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. In service training marginalized</td>
<td>7. In service training foundational</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Education for the young</td>
<td>8. Lifelong learning the focus</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Why is the paradigm question so important for Christian schools? Why should we concern ourselves with such matters? Won’t such a focus only cause us to divert our attention away from a return to the basics? There are several reasons why as Christian school administrators, educators and teachers we need to pay careful attention to these trends.

First, the potential for improving the overall educational process is enormous if we put to full use, in an intelligent and biblical way, the benefits and advancements which are accompanying the information age. Education and curriculum packages are becoming available which allow input from every type of learning channel. The computer can facilitate creativity and fast research, since entire libraries can be accessed from our living rooms. Home-based and lifelong learning have greater potential than at anytime in previous history. We cannot design innovative and effective strategies for this new era if we are unaware of the paradigm shifts driving our culture.

Second, according to a recent report in Christianity Today, the home-schooling movement is coming of age. The subtitle is even more revealing, “teaching at home moves up to the cutting edge of education.” The article assesses the quickly changing image of the home-schooling movement.

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“Although modern home-schooling families initially earned a reputation as being counter-cultural and separatistic, there is growing evidence such families are in the minority today. Mark Weston, state services coordinator with the Education Commission of the States in Denver, a nonprofit, bipartisan interstate compact that services state policy makers, has found that home-schoolers are not unplugging from the culture at large, but rather may be early adopters of new trends and technology. ‘Home-schoolers are no longer dropping out of society,’ Weston says, ‘These people are very plugged in -- with computers, accessing the Internet, and networking with other home-schoolers.’ Weston advocates cooperation among the public and private schools and the home-schooling community.”

Many home-schooling networks are on the verge of actually becoming new paradigm schools - innovative, educationally sound, learning centers - quite possibly a prototype of what is to come. Traditional private schools, with all their buildings, overhead and teacher salaries, are likely to go the way of the typewriter if careful strategic planning of a paradigmatic nature is not undertaken before the end of the decade. Just this week an article appeared in the New York Times entitled “An Ode to the Typewriter,” in which it creatively documented the recent bankruptcy of the Smith Corona Corporation, which once dominated the typewriter market-place. Failing to grasp the significance of the changes at hand, it merely tried to stretch the old paradigm by putting little memory screens on top of their typewriters, and eventually lost the entire market. Is it possible that Christian schools could suffer the same fate by failing to harness the tremendous potential of their resources and do the necessary redesign, paradigmatic planning, and bold pioneering? Joel Barker may be right, when he states in “Paradigm Pioneers” - a video from his widely known paradigm video series - that in the coming few decades it may not be the pioneers who are at risk, but rather the settlers.

But third, and the most important reason for paying attention to these paradigmatic trends, is that our Christian education model does not fully integrate the home, the church and the school, and therefore is not truly Christian. In general it is more reflective of the fragmented secular schooling paradigm, a product of the Enlightenment, which dominates our twentieth century societies. We must seek to build an overall framework, a biblical paradigm, if you will, (which by the way, allows room for many different models), which can guide us through the paradigmatic changes.

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10 Ibid., p. 52.
and the unparalleled opportunity of the first half of the next century. This is the task to which we now turn.

Elements of a New Paradigm: Church-Based Christian Education

In building a new framework, it is necessary to assess the current framework, whether we decide to build upon its foundation - logical thinking - or move laterally and lay new foundations - lateral thinking. I’m not so sure that lateral thinking is needed, at least not to the degree that we have called upon it in theological education and missions; rather integrated thinking seems needed, which attempts to deal with the almost total lack of comprehensive ordered learning that we see in the church today. Three premises are foundational to the constructing of this paradigm.

Three Premises of the New Paradigm - Church-Based Education

Premise #1: Christian education of children and adolescents is fragmented in that it does not seriously or comprehensively integrate the home, the school and the church.

It is my firm belief that our current Christian education paradigm is fragmented - the church, the home and the school all attempting to educate with little sense of an overall framework. This is compounded even further with the disarray in contemporary curricula, which demonstrates, at the deepest level, the same fragmentation of knowledge which characterizes public education and our public and private university institutions.

1. Fragmented Christian education framework

Christian education is fragmented at every level. (See Figure 2: “The Problem Visualized: A Fragmented Christian Education Approach.”) Children seldom get a comprehensive, ordered, development of their faith through a Sunday school program, or through a program put together by their parents. Christian schools are not much better than the Sunday school systems, when it comes to a well-integrated, comprehensive biblical curriculum. They reflect the same fragmentation as the rest of contemporary Christian curricula. Young adults experience the same fragmented Christian education approach as they journey through youth ministry programs (usually disassociated from the adult life of the church), individualistic discipleship programs (in which the church often gets only token acknowledgment, if at all), or go on to Christian colleges, which are almost completely disassociated, in the educational processes, from the life of the local church, the family unit and the world of work, if not

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12 The treatment of the concept and introduction to the skills of lateral thinking can be found in the book Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step, by Edward de Bono (Harper & Row, 1970).

13 Church-Based Theological Education; Church-Based Missions; and Church-Based Theology, op cit.
completely separated. Adults add to all of this “how to” books, Christian seminars and radio programs. Since no framework exists for serious, disciplined Christian education, each has to go out and find his or her own solutions as problems surface. The result is unestablished believers, who have little depth of Christian knowledge, and remain at an elementary level in their faith. (See Farley’s quote on figure 2.)

The lack of a comprehensive framework for Christian education is evident as well in the disunity, and often tense relationships of those who are involved in Christian education. Who decides on the education forms, the curriculum structure, the materials used, the teachers hired? Who decides how the money, which we as Christians put towards Christian education, is to be divided up? Who decides what the parents are responsible for, the church is responsible for, and the school is responsible for, in the task of Christian education? Does it even matter?

Just the fact alone that we have three movements: Christian schools; home-schooling; and Christians with their kids in public schools who desire the Christian education of their kids to take place directly in the life of the church; is enough to say that the church today has a fragmented understanding, and fragmented approach to Christian education. Pastors often react to their churches being recruited for money by an educational system which says that Christian education is best handled by schools, and professionals - we have professional Christian missionaries, professional Christian counselors, professional Christian educators. The church often becomes a recruitment ground for funds with only token involvement. Thus the tension. Home-schoolers often react at the thought of anyone else teaching their children; and the Christian schools often react to non-professionals becoming deeply involved in the process.

We have little sense today of a serious disciplined and comprehensive approach to Christian education. On top of these realities, the average Christian adult has no desire for serious ordered learning of the faith because he feels that it is for those who are “going into the ministry,” and therefore it is irrelevant to him. The problem of contemporary Christian education is enormous.
The Problem Visualized:
A Fragmented Christian Education Approach

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Reality Visualized</th>
<th>Learning as a Child</th>
<th>Learning as a Young Adult</th>
<th>Learning as an Adult</th>
<th>Learning as an Older Adult</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience Today:</strong></td>
<td>• parental lectures</td>
<td>• fragmented Christian</td>
<td>• fragmented adult</td>
<td>• why bother, not needed</td>
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<td>• market-driven</td>
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<td>• shallow family</td>
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<td>• how-to books</td>
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The Problem Defined

"Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian learning - to historical-critical studies of the Bible, to the content and structures of the great doctrines, to two thousand years of classic works on the Christian life, to the basic disciplines of theology, biblical languages and Christian ethics? Why do bankers, lawyers, farmers, physicians, homemakers, scientists, salespeople, managers of all sorts, people who carry out all kinds of complicated tasks in their work and home, remain at a literalist, elementary school level in their religious understanding? How is it that high school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture? How is it possible one can attend or even teach in a Sunday School for decades and at the end of that time lack the interpretive skills of someone who has taken three or four weeks in an introductory course in Bible at a university or seminary?"

Edward Farley, in *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Fortress, 1998)

The Solution Proposed

The church must take seriously its responsibility to fully train believers in their faith - in the whole counsel of God, if they are to be expected to make significant contributions in the cause of Christ in the world and work in which they live. Individual households must take seriously the ordered learning of their children.
2. Fragmented Christian education curricula

One of the toughest of all problems involves our concept of curriculum. We are all concerned about multiculturalism in our public schools, and what it does to a solid educational core, as well as our concern. (The inability of our students of formal Christian education to move across cultural barriers ought to concern us as well.) And we are concerned about the child-centered approaches derived form the romanticism of Rousseau, Dewey and others, and their effect on the study of an objective, disciplined core by all. Yet paying attention to the unique learning styles of each person, and the developmental processes inherent in all persons, need not necessarily preclude the commitment to the disciplined, orderly study of a core of knowledge and truth.

What ought to be our biggest curriculum concern, with far greater consequences on Christian curricula than the above mentioned, is the very deep fragmentation of knowledge into unrelated academic disciplines. Not only are contemporary Christian education curricula fragmented (isolated) from the life of the family, the church and the workplace, but they are also fragmented in their very design. The old discipline of theological encyclopedia - which asked the questions: what should a minister study? and what order ought he to study it in? - is extinct, and so the serious questions of general encyclopedia for Christian education are almost never asked. Edward Farley, in Theologia: The Unity and Fragmentation of Theological Education argues that the original goal in theological education, prior to the enlightenment’s effects on curricula, that of acquiring wisdom, has been replaced with the goal of mastering academic disciplines.

That is now the case in Christian schools and colleges as well. Most, if not all Christian schools are fooling themselves if they say they have integrated curriculum - that is a curriculum which integrates all of the disciplines into a wisdom-based orientation, which is well integrated with

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14 It is a commonly understood and addressed problem in mission circles that students prepared in our Bible colleges are often ill prepared to enter another culture and minister effectively because they are unaware of cultural subtleties.

15 E.D. Hirsch, in his national best seller Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (Houghton Muffin, 1987), (around which the core knowledge schools are built), deals with the importance of a core knowledge curriculum, and the fragmentation which is taking place in our public school curriculum, in chapter V: “Cultural Literacy and the Schools”, see the section title “The Rise of the Fragmented Curriculum,” pp. 110-125.

16 In my previous paper, Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm, we dealt with one aspect of Christian education - educating leaders for the church, which we believe must be radically restructured. One of the books which influenced the entire discussion is Theologia: The Unity and Fragmentation of Theological Education, by Edward Farley (Fortress, 1983). Farley establishes that our entire theological education enterprise is fragmented and disassociated from the life of the church. Theological education curricula itself is fragmented, departmentalized and professionalized. Theological education, or serious ordered learning of our faith, has become a matter of professional ministerial preparation, rather than a disciplined orientation of the soul for the purpose of acquiring wisdom needed by all men regardless of their profession. Farley has traced the effects of the professionalization of theological education on the church, specifically on Christian education, is his invaluable article “Can Church Education Be Theological Education?” chapter 5 in The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church & the University (Fortress, 1988). The problem continues to move down the ladder of Christian education, in the sense that if the parents are “theologically uneducated” (no serious adult Christian education) then the children will be “theologically uneducated” (no serious, comprehensive childhood and adolescent education) as well.
the real life of the student: the life of the home, the church and the workplace.

What about childhood and adolescent Christian education and the local church? Here we have the Sunday school system, a carefully constructed paradigm designed in England to keep the noisy urchins off the streets on Sunday morning so they would not bother the churchgoers. It has evolved in the United States into a huge, market-driven publishing industry. Have the Sunday school publishers developed a carefully constructed curriculum which integrates the home and church, is wisdom-based, and builds a comprehensive biblical world view?\(^7\) Have you ever exeged a Sunday school workbook or teacher’s guide?

Finally, what about Christian home-schooling curricula? They usually suffer from all of the above curriculum diseases, and many have picked up an additional virus along the way. Because of their often fundamentalist type stance toward culture, and their narrow belief that only parents should educate their children, home school curricula can be highly selective material, narrow, and often of poor academic quality. Though as mentioned earlier, many home-schoolers are moving out to the leading edge of Christian education, much of their curricula are rooted in an old rigid paradigm.

Where do we begin? We must start with a basic commitment in our churches. The local church family must take very seriously its responsibility to train believers in their faith - in the whole counsel of God - if believers are to be expected to make significant contributions in the cause of Christ in the world in which they live and work. Individual households must take seriously the ordered learning of their children, within a comprehensive church-based framework. The learning process must be serious, ordered, and integrated. It must be comprehensive in nature, comprehensive enough to warrant sustained effort over several years, or it will not bear its full fruit.

**Premise #2:** Christian education must be church-based at its core.

I believe, that at the foundation of any broad educational framework which calls itself Christian, must be the local church. Christian education must be church-based. Too often the local church is marginalized in our evangelical culture today: missions requires the special expertise of mission agencies; clergy education requires the expertise of professional theologians and seminaries; counseling requires the special expertise of Christian psychologists and psychiatrists; and Christian education requires the special expertise of professional educators. We need areas of special expertise and gifts. No one is disputing these matters. But the local church has been marginalized in most of our significant ministry paradigms, and therefore the models themselves become fragmented, and more often reflect our cultural values rather than the biblical ideals.

\(^7\) Lawrence Richard’s made a valiant attempt at a home and church integrated curriculum several years ago, and the warehouses are still full of the stuff. We need more such attempts.
What exactly do I mean by church-based? Primarily I mean that the local church is at the center of our paradigm, our ministry models, and our year in and year out practice of the ministry itself - whether that be missions, leadership training, counseling and shepherding, Christian education, or any other major ministry enterprise. The image church-housed versus church-based, which I discussed in my theological education paper applies here as well. Too often today our Christian schools and home-schooling strategies are really church-housed, not church-based ministries.

This points to an inadequate view of God’s design for the local church. If schools approach churches from a church-housed framework, the most solid pastors will resist the approach. Program oriented pastors will respond, but critical thinkers who think in an integrated fashion will reject a schooling model which does not understand the role and life of a local church, and have it fully integrated into its strategy. Let’s look at the difference:

**Christian Education must be**

- **church-based at its**
- **core and wisdom**
- **based in its**
- **infrastructure.**

**Church-Housed:** The school is housed in the church building, or in some other building supported by the church or churches, the church recommends or sponsors the school, the parents send their kids, but the school builds and is responsible for the whole training program.

**Church-Based:** The school is integrated with the life of the church and the home, each understanding, respecting and fully carrying out its responsibilities, taking care that each institution - the church, the home or the school - attempts to carry out its functions within the integrated balance of the others, none usurping the God-given role of the home and the local church.

There are only two basic concepts which need to be grasped in order to set the basic integration framework in place. The first is the concept of the individual household, the family. The family is the basic, most core institution of the Christian education process. The overall responsibility of the paideia - the discipline and instruction, Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:18-21 - of the children is given to the parents, especially the fathers. These passages are part of the “household texts” of the New Testament epistles, which were a common form in Greek literature of the day.\(^{18}\) This is consistent with the Hebrew model and can be seen in such passages as Deuteronomy 6:6,7 and wisdom literature passages such as Proverbs 1-9 and 31.

\(^{18}\) Several early church scholars have dealt extensively with the household texts of the pastoral epistles, the most useful at this point is *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, by David C. Verner (Scholars Press, 1983). Verner demonstrates convincingly that 1 Timothy 3:14-16 is the organizing center of the pastoral epistles, and that Paul understood himself to be giving “household guidelines” for local churches, just as he gave “household guidelines” for individual families as in Ephesians 5:18-6:4.
The second basic concept is that of the household of God, the local church family. The idea of the local church being an extended household, a family of families, is not just a metaphor, but a real truth. This can be seen throughout the New Testament epistles, but is probably laid out the clearest in the pastoral epistles, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. The organizing principle of these epistles is stated in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, where it states that the local church is the pillar and support of the truth, and that God has given instruction on how the community should order itself, just as he has for individual families. An example of how real God sees this family of families is this: He gives instructions that individual families are to take care of their own widows, and if they can’t, the local church family is to care for the widows in their midst who are in need (1 Timothy 5:8ff). These epistles are full of instructions from the assumed framework that the church is a family of families - a true community.

The local church then, building upon these fundamental concepts, organizes community enterprises however it wishes, under the oversight of a council of household heads, referred to in the epistles as pastors, elders, church leaders, etc. Some common enterprises as we know them today are Sunday schools, day-care centers, schools, counseling centers, hospitals, seminaries, missions, etc. The point is that these enterprises should never replace the basic units - the family and the local church family - and their divinely intended functions, but rather enhance, strengthen and build upon them.

So whatever our program, it must respect the household - the house order God has set forth - which few of our contemporary ministry paradigms do. Rarely, if ever have I seen a comprehensive model which fully integrates the school, the home and the church. There is a tremendous need for an integrated model. The Christian school often misunderstands its role and makes itself the core institution with the family and local church being peripheral. Home-schoolers often misunderstand their core role, and assume that they are the only ones responsible, failing to recognize that they are a family within a family, and failing to recognize the teaching gifts within the church. We desperately need an overall framework, a paradigm if you will, which takes very seriously the integration of the home, the church and the school, at every point in the model.

Premise #3: Christian education must be wisdom-based throughout its infrastructure.

Assuming the church-based premise - that the church is a family made up of individual families, a household of individual households, and that this is more than just a metaphor - I believe that, from a biblical theology stand point, the best place to begin building a Christian education framework, is the wisdom literature.

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19 Biblical theology is a way of going about theological study which lets biblical agendas surface from a careful study of the Scriptures, in the order in which they were written, respecting the individual authors and the categories of literature, such as the Pauline letters, or wisdom literature: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Job. This is in contrast to the typical way of doing theology today - systematic theology, in which theologians determine the categories and place biblical material in those predetermined categories.
Old Testament Wisdom Literature: It is important to understand the nature of the wisdom literature. The main Hebrew word for wisdom is “hochma,” which literally means skill in living. It pictures all aspects of lifelong learning and development - life planning, family life, work, community life, finances, education, etc. Besides a general skill in living orientation, which seems to cover all ages, the wisdom literature, especially Proverbs, has a life long development orientation. Proverbs 1:1-7 gives a picture of one who is progressing, from the naive (open) stage to that of becoming wise (a basic skill in living) to the wiser (“making the wise wiser”) which seems to apply to those who are acquiring a more complex wisdom in tandem with their progressing to an older age. See figure 3: “Developmental Aspects in the Hebrew Wisdom Tradition.”

Ancient Wisdom Traditions: In addition to the wisdom literature itself, we can look at this wisdom model worked out in the Jewish culture. In the Talmud, finalized around 400 AD, in “The Sayings of the Fathers,” it talks of the “ages of man”:

- 5 years is for reading (Scripture);
- 10 for Misnah (the laws);
- 13 for Commandments (Bar Mitzvah, moral responsibility);
- 15 for Gemara (Talmudic discussions, abstract reasoning);
- 18 for Hupa (wedding canopy);
- 20 for seeking a livelihood (pursuing an occupation);
- 30 for attaining full strength (“Koah”);
- 40 for understanding;
- 50 for giving counsel;
- 60 for becoming an elder (wisdom, old age);
- 70 for white hair;
- 80 for Gevurah (new, special strength of old age);
- 90 for being bent under the weight of the years;
- 100 for being as if almost dead and passed away from the world.20

And, built upon this wisdom tradition, and this overall developmental framework, the Jewish people have worked out an education framework, within which they build all of their educational and curricula strategies. This framework has taken on a universal acceptance amongst the Jewish people, which gives stability to the

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20 This particular arrangement was taken from The Seasons of a Man’s Life, by Daniel Levinson (Ballantine, 1978), p. 325.
Developmental Aspects in the Hebrew Wisdom Tradition

Hebrew Wisdom Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD</th>
<th>YOUTH (NAÏVE)</th>
<th>WISE</th>
<th>WISER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• fear of the Lord</td>
<td>• gain common sense</td>
<td>• ability to manage life skillfully</td>
<td>• ability to see below the surface to real underlying issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• train up</td>
<td>• shrewd, world-wise behavior</td>
<td>• ability to deal wisely with people</td>
<td>• acquire and assimilate complex counsel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discipline</td>
<td>• a clear head and focus</td>
<td></td>
<td>• solve complex problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPROPRIATE PROVERBS

PROVERBS 1-9, 31
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON

needs experience

needs overall skill

Kohlberg’s Moral Development Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Ward’s Adaptation of Kohlberg

The Sayings of the Fathers
(From the Jewish Talmud)

5 years is for reading (Scripture);
10 for Mismah (the laws);
13 for Commandments (Bar Mitzvah, moral responsibility);
15 for Gemara (Talmudic discussions, abstract reasoning);
18 for Hupa (wedding canopy);
20 for seeking a livelihood (pursuing an occupation);
30 for attaining full strength (“Koah”);
40 for understanding;
50 for giving counsel;
60 for becoming an elder (wisdom, old age);
70 for white hair;
90 for being bent under the weight of the years;
100 for being as if almost dead and passed away from the world.
overall education process, a reality which the church of Jesus Christ is woefully lacking. Probably the clearest treatment I have encountered in my research of this overall framework is found in a book entitled *Bar Mitzvah* by Sarah Silberstein Swartz.\(^1\) The book is built around four sections, which give an outstanding picture of their education framework and their world view, or paradigm, to use the concept set forth earlier in this article. See figure 4. Several things are built into this framework: one’s individual identity; family roles and responsibilities; a sense of community; and a vision and purpose in life which is far bigger than oneself, one’s family, and even one’s own local community of faith. Together this not only gives cohesion to one’s life, but an outstanding educational framework from which to operate.

**Figure 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1: The Jewish Individual</th>
<th>“Today I am a man of duty.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: The Jewish Family</td>
<td>“Adolescence is something that happens to a family, not just an individual.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3: The Jewish Community</td>
<td>“All Jewish people are responsible for each other.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: Jews in the World Community</td>
<td>“In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Contemporary Research:* There is another important aspect of this wisdom heritage, which is more indirect, and possibly cannot be tied together at all, except for the remarkable parallels to this Jewish wisdom heritage. That is the moral development research of Lawrence Kohlberg, which could not help but reinforce aspects of his Jewish heritage. I was introduced to Kohlberg’s work through Dr. Ted Ward, of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, who has done extensive research with the findings of Kohlberg, and how they can be an archetypal guide for Christian parents in the moral development of their children. The following chart,\(^2\) presented by Ward at a workshop for training BILD leadership, visualizes the moral development model well. See figure 3. It too plays a big part in helping us construct a working model of a wisdom-based educational framework for childhood and adolescence.

We are now are in a position to construct a model based upon the New Testament understanding of the church as a family of families, and the Old Testament wisdom tradition\(^3\) - which together supply the essential elements of a biblical framework for Christian education.

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\(^1\) *Bar Mitzvah*, by Sarah Silberstein Swartz, (Doubleday, 1985). This is a beautifully designed book which pulls together a sense of the strength of tradition behind the educational process, especially the moral development. It is out of print at the present time.

\(^2\) The different phases of the chart are developed in chapters 6-10 of *Values Begin at Home*, by Ted Ward (Victor, 1989).

\(^3\) This wisdom tradition has found itself as part of the entire history of western thought, though the west attributes its roots to Socrates, and to Plato and his academy, not to the ancient wisdom traditions of Israel and the surrounding nations. This wisdom orientation throughout the west is often referred to as “practical wisdom.” There has been a recent resurgence of the wisdom tradition in every discipline in the last few decades, as can be seen in such books as *Working Wisdom* by Aubrey and Cohen, in which the authors tie in with the historical concept of practical wisdom; *Theologia* by Farley, who calls for the orientation of education being not the master of academic disciplines but the orientation of the soul for the
The Basic Framework - Church-Based Christian Education

In attempting to put together a Christian framework, we need to consider the fact that every Christian is to be involved in lifelong development - lifelong learning, and build a framework in light of this. In this article we will restrict our framework to childhood and adolescence. In the second article, we will deal with early, middle and late adulthood. In figure 5, “A Church-Based Christian Education Framework,” we have attempted to visualize a model which takes into account all aspects of the preceding discussion. (Note: You will need to constantly refer to figure 5 while reading the following section.)

The Basic Framework

First, notice that the paradigm converges the Jewish Bar Mitzvah world view examined earlier - the individual, the family, the believing community and the world community with the developmental elements observed in the wisdom literature, especially Proverbs. The ages are merely guides, not intended to box anyone into a bracket. An addition to what has been established up to this point, is the progression from individual to family to local church member, to the world community. In this fashion a biblical world view unfolds as the educational process progresses.

The emphasis from ages 0-6 is on the individual’s core identity - his unique worth and value to God. This has to be tempered with the reality of his fallen nature, thus the concept of authority. Discipline from outside themselves has to be part of the framework of this stage. Things to be learned are individual physical skills: walking, talking, reading, etc.

The emphasis from ages 6-12 is on the family, since they are not developed enough to live, work and minister on their own outside of the family. Much of their family values are rooted into them for life at this stage. Family roles and values frame in their sense of masculinity and femininity. Things to be learned at this stage are core in their nature: core knowledge, core family values, core wisdom truths, basic stories of their faith, etc.
## A Church-Based\Wisdom-Based Christian Education Framework℠

**Childhood and Adolescence**

**Figure 5**

### Individual Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Curriculum Framework</th>
<th>Learning Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6           | Individual  | “I am a child of God, unique, valuable, and forgiven” | Life Development Portfolio:  
- parents  
- son, daughter  
Life Development Curriculum Framework:  
- character development: Proverbs  
- faith development (Bible stories)  
- education & lifework development (pre-school skills: speaking, listening, writing, reading, music, art, etc...) |
| 12          | Family Member | “I am a valuable member of a family, with distinct roles & responsibilities according to God’s design” | Life Development Portfolio:  
- parents  
- son, daughter  
- teachers  
Life Development Curriculum Framework:  
- character development: Proverbs basic training – words, people, home, honesty, etc., models, rules  
- faith development (catechism – elements of a biblical worldview, home skills, ministering in family)  
- education & lifework development: (core knowledge, work experience) |
| 18          | Local Church Member | “I am a vital member of a local church, with unique gifts and ministries, to be lived out under Christ’s administration” | Life Development Portfolio:  
- son, daughter  
- parents  
- teachers  
- church leaders  
Life Development Curriculum Framework:  
- character development: values development – wisdom literature  
- faith development (worldview, community skills, gifts, responsibilities)  
- education & lifework development: complex disciplines, critical thinking, SIMA, apprenticeships, jobs, etc.) |
| 12          | World Community Member | “I am responsible to live out my faith in the world community, investing my life doing good (including occupations)” | Life Development Portfolio:  
- individual  
- mentors, parents  
- church leaders  
- teachers, employers, etc.  
World View Thesis Life Development Curriculum Framework:  
- character development (values development – wisdom literature)  

### Ministry Development

- Family Development
- Individual Development
- Family Development

Note: In a church-based system, where this all takes place in the life of healthy churches, parents can take advantage of all this is offered in the learning center and still choose to entrust the education development to a Christian school, a public school, private school such as a core knowledge school, or become part of a home school network. If done well, the learning center could actually become a “new paradigm” church-based school.
The emphasis of ages 12-18 is on the community of faith, often overlooked in our evangelical churches today. Unless they learn to become a part of the community of faith, and learn to minister and serve out of their own unique giftedness, they cannot move out into the adult world with a fully integrated life and world view. Things to be learned at this stage are more complex, and have to do with developing critical thinking abilities, and the development of individual convictions. This also matches Kohlberg’s third level of moral development very nicely. Also, notice the little short vertical line after the age 12 marker. This parallels the Jewish bar-mitzvah concept, at about 13, and is intended to put the whole community of faith in perspective. Our teens need to become, both symbolically, and actually, a vital part of the adult community at this age. They are emerging young adults, and should be treated as young adults, not children to be entertained, if we expect them to continue on in the faith as they enter the world community through the sphere of their lifework. Also note that each inaugurated emphasis of development, such as individual development, continues on throughout life.

The Core Elements

1. The life development portfolio

The life development portfolio is an integrative learning tool designed to facilitate parents in guiding and overseeing the education of their sons and daughters. The portfolio is also designed to be a flexible tool for the child and the emerging young adult to gain a sense of the overall educational process in which they are involved, and to guide them in pulling their entire education into a life planning process. In the first stage, the parents oversee the portfolio, and include their son or daughter as seems appropriate. In the second stage, the parents still oversee the portfolio, the son’s or daughter’s involvement increases significantly, and teachers become a part of the process, thus integrating the ordered educational development into the overall plan. In the third stage, the son or daughter begins managing his or her own portfolio, under the guidance of his or her parents, assisted by teachers, and church leaders, who also should become involved in their lives at this time. This is crucial to understand - that these emerging young adults, are now members of the adult believing community and need to be treated as such. Finally, and gradually, they transition to an adult life development portfolio as they move out into the world community, through their lifework, and become responsible for their own lives. They will rely on mentors, parents, church leaders, teachers, employers and other significant people in their lives, as they continue their Christian development, monitoring their own life development portfolio from then on.
The portfolio concept is an emerging powerful learning tool in education and business as we enter the age of the knowledge worker. It is estimated that our present knowledge has a half-life of four years. Not only is knowledge changing faster than we can educate ourselves, but the whole job paradigm is changing as well. William Bridges, listed by *Wall Street Journal* as one of the top ten executive consultants in the country, in his recently released book, *JobShift: How to Prosper in a Workplace without Jobs,* suggests that we are part of another paradigm shift, a jobshift. We are moving from the job paradigm, to a post-job era in which we will all be required to design a composite career, consisting of many types of work, rather than the security of having a job. Charles Handy, in *The Age of Unreason,* the book which caused IBM to rethink its whole corporate structure, (breaking up the “big blue” and creating a number of “little blues”), sees the same picture of the future, and calls for each person to develop a work portfolio.

It is not just business which is recognizing the value of portfolios. Education is cultivating the concept as well, both in adult education, and in primary and secondary education. Lewis Jackson and Rosemary Cafarella, and their colleagues, a team mostly from the University of Northern Colorado, introduce a process model of adult education built around the concept of a folio and a portfolio. The folio is your ongoing assessment and working documents of your education and work related training and experience. The portfolio is your periodic assessment of your educational progress and your self presentation tool for future work and education. Howard Gardner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, introduces the concept of a process-folio, built around significant projects, as a power development and assessment tool in education. And the powerful influencer of public education curricula, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) devoted a significant portion of an issue of *Educational Leadership* to the use of portfolios in education.

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24 *Working Wisdom,* p. 120.
At LearnCorp we have developed a very comprehensive and powerful educational tool entitled the LearnCorp Life Development Portfolio. The portfolio has two editions: one for children and adolescents, and one for adults. The adult edition will be published late fall, 1995 and the edition for young adults (ages 12-18) will be published early summer, 1996. The LearnCorp Life Development Portfolio - Childhood & Adolescence Edition is designed to have three levels: Level I for ages 0-6, Level II for ages 6-12, and Level III for ages 12-18. Each level will integrate the character development, faith development and education and lifework development sections of the life development curriculum model described in detail below. Besides the basic life development guides (character development, faith development and education and lifework development), there will be several curricula guides, development workbooks and worksheets, learning style guides and a 24 module seminar system for assisting parents, church leaders and teachers at each level of development. The LearnCorp Life Development Portfolio - Adult Edition and the Level III, Childhood and Adolescence Edition, build the portfolio around a life development timeline, four basic life development guides, and a strategic life planning guide. This allows an integrated transition from adolescence to early adulthood. In addition, the adult portfolio is designed to accommodate the design of supplementary guides for developing teachers, parents, church leaders, administrators, etc., as well as guides tailored to a particular company or industry.

2. The life development curriculum framework

The curriculum framework puts the need for serious, sustained, and integrated ordered learning in perspective, and begins seriously addressing the need for some type of schooling strategy. This again must be viewed as a partnership between the school, church and parent. From the strategic overview vantage point, several things need to be noted about the curriculum framework. During the second stage, ages 6-12, the emphasis should be on core knowledge. In the third stage the emphasis should be on developing wisdom - the ability to think, to discern, to develop and put the core knowledge to use. This stage is capped off with a world view presentation by each young adult, which is designed to pull everything together from the entire process. They will also design the next stage in their development: advanced studies, vocational development, lifework goals, etc. Refer to figure 6: “Wisdom-Based Life Development Curriculum Framework” frequently throughout this section.

30 Notice the word curriculum, not curricula. It is a comprehensive curriculum in the sense that it integrates all curriculum into one whole, thus paradigmatic. It is a curriculum made up of many curricula.
Wisdom-Based Life Development Curriculum Framework
Childhood and Adolescence

Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual (Founding)</th>
<th>Family Member (Building)</th>
<th>Community Member (Deepening)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROVERBS: MORAL CORE</td>
<td>PROVERBS: BASIC TRAINING</td>
<td>WISDOM LITERATURE: VALUES DEVELOPMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>FAITH DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>THEOLOGY IN CULTURE: TOWARD A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hebrew Wisdom Literature)</td>
<td>(Bible Stories)</td>
<td>Biblical Theology (Building a Framework from Scripture) Biblical Worldview and Practical Theology for Life and Ministry (Bar-Mitzvah experience &amp; full church responsibilities, develop personal ministry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohlberg</td>
<td>Fowler</td>
<td>Cultural Worldviews and Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Parents, Kohlberg)</td>
<td>(Parents, Church, Fowler)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAITH DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; LIFEWORK DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORE TEACHINGS</td>
<td>PRE-SCHOOLING SKILLS</td>
<td>COMPLEX DISCIPLINES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Parents, Church, School, Business)</td>
<td>(Speaking, listening, writing, reading, music, art, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Parents, Church, School, Business)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Worldview Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piaget</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The fact that it is a curriculum framework needs to be clearly and fully understood in order to use it as a tool in the way in which it is intended. It is itself not a curriculum, though at LearnCorp we intend on developing curricula to fit within the framework. Many of the initial tools though will not be actual curricula, but process tools designed to guide parents, church leaders, teachers and the children and young adults themselves throughout the process. It is also an educational philosophy, in that it has purpose - it is driven by the desire to help each individual, uniquely created by God with gifts and abilities, to fully serve God within a biblical world view; and it has core content: biblical core content (the didache, wisdom literature, etc.) and general “core knowledge.”

Character Development: In this section, as established earlier, the Hebrew wisdom literature sets the framework. It is amazing when studied thoroughly how comprehensive its topics are. When we thoroughly studied Proverbs from a biblical theology vantage point, we came up with over 65 basic category clusters, grouped around five general ideas. The progression of the use of the wisdom literature in this curriculum framework is fairly basic. First, from ages 0-6 the emphasis is on the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of all wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). An excellent resource is Proverbs for Kids from the Book,31 which has over 190 simple topics, and is well illustrated. From ages 6-12 the basics of Proverbs, the five general idea clusters, and the 65 basic category clusters, are more than enough material for these six years. From ages 12-18 the curriculum framework piece is built around the more complex wisdom literature, especially that which emphasizes values and convictions development.

The curriculum framework chart in this section begins with skill in living at the core (wisdom). The second concentric circle lists all of the key synonyms for wisdom. The outward circle is divided into four sections, which completes the study of the wisdom literature, and beautifully surfaces the main issues of adolescence: staying on the moral path; romantic love and marriage; meaning of life, work, suffering; and world view issues. If we did nothing else for our kids than take them through the process of building a comprehensive theology of the biblical wisdom literature, we would have laid excellent foundations. LearnCorp is well down the road in developing a comprehensive wisdom-based character development guide for parents, church leaders and teachers which we hope to field test in 1996.

Faith Development: In this section of the curriculum framework, we are particularly fragmented in evangelicalism today. This has not always been the case in church history. In the early church the new believers, even young believers, were trained in the core gospel, taught through the creeds and the core teaching of the apostles, which were packaged into early century didaches (the Greek word for teaching). During and after the Reformation, the terms were changed, but the believers, even the young ones, experienced the same ordered, disciplined training - the core gospel being taught in the confessions, and the didache was packaged into catechisms. But today we have no such packaged “core knowledge,” nor do we require any serious study or mastery of such core knowledge. We have little sense of an ordered world view, as exemplified in the Jewish model. We have no Christian “bar mitzvahs,” which inaugurate emerging young

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31 Proverbs for Kids From the Book, (Tyndale, 1985).
adults into the adult community of the church after a period of serious study of the core teachings of the faith.

In our model, at ages 0-6 we recommend reading stories to and with our children, as the main way of passing on the faith. In the Jewish model, age five was for reading, thus paralleling our life development framework suggestion. At ages 6-12 we suggest building the framework of a biblical world view, a catechism, which is studied very seriously from the ages of 10-13. This is again heavily influenced by the Jewish model, which among other things required the commandments - the entire Pentateuch - to be memorized during this time. At ages 12-18, we suggest building a serious “theology in culture” approach to training these young adults. This would include building a comprehensive framework from Scripture; a careful look at contemporary cultural world views and issues; and the building of a comprehensive biblical world view, ministry and lifework paradigm.32

Throughout this faith development process, should be a faithful practice of ministry, first with and through the family at ages 6-12, and then, in addition to ministering in and through the family, full church responsibilities should be assumed, marked by some sort of community ceremony that ushers them into this 12-18 stage. During this time, personal gifts should be identified, and personal ministries developed. This is one reason why it is impossible to divorce Christian education from the life of the church, just as it would have been absurd in the Jewish training process to divorce the bar-mitzvah from the synagogue and the community of faith.

Education and LifeWork Development: This is where the issues of a schooling approach surface the strongest. To do thorough work in the educational process at this level requires some sort of schooling. This part of the life development curriculum framework will be useful regardless of whether parents are sending their kids to Christian schools, private or public schools, or home schooling. We at LearnCorp hope in the near future to embark on a joint project with interested investors, publishers, churches, schools and parents, to create, (over approximately a ten year period), a comprehensive curriculum which will integrate all of the elements of this level of the life development educational framework. But for now, let’s examine the framework itself. As in any comprehensive effort, many people contribute to the architecture. In this case several authors and educators have been drawn upon to surface and conceptualize this framework.33 Their names are scattered throughout the diagram.

32 For treatment of both the core teachings (didache, catechism) and theology in culture process, see my paper “Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm.” For leadership level courses on these two ideas, see BILD-International’s leadership series courses: Essentials of Sound Doctrine, which is in the final stages of field testing, and will be released this fall; and Doing Theology in Culture, which is in the final stages of the first draft. Also note that BILD’s four volume Establishing Series I, covers the essentials of the core teaching (didache, catechism), and has been used effectively with high school students. To inquire on these resources call BILD-International at 515-292-7012.

33 Some of the most influential works include Beyond Education, Thomas (1991); The Credential Society: The Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification, by Randall Collins (Academic Press, 1979); Public Education, Lieberman (Harvard, 1993); Cultural Literacy, by E.D. Hirsch (Houghton Muffling, 1987), and his 6 volume Core Knowledge Series: What Every 1st Grader Needs to Know, (Delta, 1992-93), one volume for each grades 1-6; Mortimer Adler’s paideia trilogy: The Paideia Proposal (Macmillan, ), The Paideia
At the outset it should be noted that this curriculum framework, often
thought to be the sole job of schools, is in reality, (even though centered in
a school, residential or “virtual”), most effectively carried out as a
partnership between the school, the church, the parents and the business
community. The ages 0-6 stage concentrates on pre-schooling skills, which
are fundamental, and are best facilitated in a creative, loving family
environment, ideally with very significant availability of the mother. The
two main parts of our focus, from an educational, schooling mind set are:
the second stage, ages 6-12, of which the focus is core knowledge; and the
third stage, ages 12-18, which we are marking by the term complex
disciplines.

The framework of the core knowledge stage, ages 6-12, is marked by the
work of two men who have a tremendous grasp of the problems of
contemporary curricula. E.D. Hirsch, with his core knowledge idea, has
built an excellent case for the fact that we must all have a common
knowledge base from which to function effectively in culture. His six
volumes, previously footnoted, provide an excellent core knowledge guide.
His core knowledge categories, which can serve as an excellent guide to
“checking” the current core knowledge base of our children include the
following:

- English Language and Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- History
- Social Studies
- A Foreign Language
- The Fine Arts
- The Manual Arts
- The World of Work
- Physical Education

Mortimer Adler has attempted to identify that core and set forth a program
as well, in The Paideia Program: An Educational Syllabus. Whereas
Hirsch focuses on the core information we need to know, and summarizes
that core content. Adler focuses on what he calls the great conversation,
and builds a reading program around that conversation from grade one, on
into the Gateway to the Great Books on to the Great Books series, both
published by Britannica, Inc. Together they provide a comprehensive guide
to the core knowledge needed in this stage. Parents can use these guides to
supplement whatever curricula strategies their children are part of; schools
can use them in building a comprehensive curriculum; and adults can use
them as a lifelong learning strategy, since most of us adults are products of
a fragmented educational process, and don’t have a sense of a complete
“core knowledge.”

Problems and Possibilities (Macmillan,) and The Paideia Program: An Educational Syllabus
(Macmillan, 1984); along with A Guidebook to Learning for the Lifelong Pursuit of Wisdom
(Macmillan, 1986); several of Howard Gardner’s works: The Unschooled Mind (Basic
Books, 1993), Multiple Intelligences (Basic Books, 1993, and Frames of Mind: The Theory of
Multiple Intelligences (Basic Books, 1983/1993); and Paulo Friere, Pedagogy of the
Oppressed (Continuum, 1970/1984) and Education for Critical Consciousness (Continuum,

To become more informed on the concept of core knowledge, see Common Knowledge:
The Core Knowledge Newsletter, put out by the Core Knowledge Foundation. Call (804) 977-
7550.
their diseases. A commitment to the concept of core knowledge does not preclude paying attention to some of the better contributions of educational philosophy, even aspects of child-centered education. Gardner, in his voluminous research and writing, has done excellent work in effectively demonstrating that there are several, seven to be exact, natural learning patterns that we have as human beings, and that if we organize core curricula and our teaching methods to match those styles, learning will be greatly enhanced.\textsuperscript{35} Adler makes a case for a core curriculum, but then goes on to emphasize that the content can be taught by three different methods:

- acquisition of organized knowledge by means of didactic instruction and lectures (textbooks: language, math, history, etc.)
- development of intellectual skills by means of coaching, exercises and supervised practice (reading, writing, speaking, etc.)
- enlarged understanding of ideas and values by meaning of Socratic discussions (books, other forms of art, etc.)\textsuperscript{36}

Some extraordinarily useful work has been done by Art Miller, the creator of SIMA, and his team of colleagues who make up People Management International. Art has created SIMA, which stands for System for Identifying Motivated Abilities. Through their extensive process they can begin identifying an individual MAP - motivated abilities pattern - built not from tests, profiles or predetermined classifications, but from an individual’s own personal story. The results are a careful, individualized analysis of one’s natural motivating abilities, interests and ideal work environments which can maximize the learning process in the present, and guide one in his future lifework.\textsuperscript{37} (We are in discussion with SIMA to integrate their process with the LearnCorp Life Development Portfolio, which together with the life development time line would be an unbeatable combination to aid individualized strategic planning for lifelong learning and lifework development.)

The framework of the complex disciplines stage, ages 12-18, is much more complex, but also very exciting. It is the stage where one enters the world of vast knowledge, with a wide array of almost inexhaustible disciplines, any one of which a person could work within for a lifetime. The problem is that the academic disciplines are quite unrelated, and the entire educational process, with all of its choices and electives, is much like

\textsuperscript{35} An excellent resource to begin looking at the practical uses of Gardner’s work on curriculum development and teaching methods, see \textit{Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom}, by Thomas Armstrong (ASCD, 1994).

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{The Paideia Proposal}, pp. 21-36.

\textsuperscript{37} People Management International has offices in Hartford, Atlanta, Minneapolis and Seattle. International offices are in Holland, England and Australia.
wandering through the line of a cafeteria, where one has to make quick choices from a wide variety of food. One of the major implications of this dilemma, which only compounds itself upon entrance into a university, is that these quick cafeteria type choices often set a direction for one’s lifework, without adequate exposure to one’s natural motivating abilities, without a sense of the whole of this knowledge, and with very little valuable lifework experience. All this means that our life development curriculum framework must help us sort all of this out, integrate it, and guide us in constructing a well informed education and lifework plan, though provisional and heuristic in nature. There are three aspects to this process: 1) categorizing the disciplines into a whole, so that one can develop specifically in any area with a benefit of the whole; 2) learning methods and styles appropriate to gaining wisdom, not just knowledge; and 3) applying this wisdom to our unfolding sense of lifework, which will ultimately be our integrating core.

First then, is the task of developing a sense of the disciplines as a whole, or maybe a more foundational task of summarizing the key ideas from which these disciplines are formed. Several attempts have been made to build a sense of the unity of knowledge, which today is divided into several academic disciplines. For us as Christians, our overall unity is our world view, as worked out in the faith development section of the curriculum framework. Nevertheless, an attempt at integrating all of the disciplines into a unified whole is useful for all to gain at least an elementary grasp, both for future lifelong learning, and for gaining balanced exposure. Two models have emerged, which can serve as reliable guides. The first is from the summary of a study sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. They recommend the following academic framework for general education:

- **Language:** The Crucial Connection
- **Art:** The Esthetic Experience
- **Heritage:** The Living Past
- **Institutions:** The Social Web
- **Nature:** Ecology of the Planet
- **Work:** The Value of Vocation
- **Identity:** The Search for Meaning

The point is, that all of our academic disciplines, such as engineering, need a framework home, or a world view home, which this Carnegie framework is attempting to give them. Each discipline has to be related to an overall framework to give it meaning and from which to build a lifework plan. Without it, one would have to be satisfied to have, “he was a good engineer” engraved on his tombstone. Whereas Hirsch’s core knowledge categories serve as a guide for basic knowledge, these categories serve as a beginning to forming a world view and shaping a life plan.

The second attempt is by Mortimer Adler, outlined in his *Guidebook to Lifelong Learning: For the Lifelong Pursuit of Wisdom*. His framework is built around two tools: the Propaideia, and the Syntopican.

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The Propaideia:
Organized around ten basic areas of knowledge, each extensively outlined and integrated with the entire Britannica Encyclopedia, which is now on CD

The Syntopican:
Organized around 101 great ideas and over 3000 sub-ideas, and coordinated with the 60 volume Great Books of the Western World, also published by Britannica

When tied together with the paideia program mentioned in the core knowledge stage, this becomes a very impressive framework for guiding the general educational development of our children.39

The learning methods are very important at this stage of the curriculum framework as well. The process of gaining wisdom is more than just gathering facts, expressing those facts in one’s own words and then doing something with those facts. (Those are the first three levels of educational outcomes in Bloom’s taxonomy.) But we must, as Bloom demonstrates, raise the outcomes to much deeper levels, which include the more complex processes of breaking down information; understanding how the parts relate to the whole; putting things together so that they fit and integrating parts into a new whole; and validating - evaluating the use of knowledge, judging or comparing ideas, procedures and products.40

One very effective way that this can be done is by what Adler calls the Seminar/Socratic discussion method41 (which parallels, by the way, the Jewish talmudic advice: 15 years old, for Gemara - for Talmudic discussions and abstract reasoning), which is a lot like graduate education teams at Oxford in England. The case study method, which is modeled as the almost exclusive education method at Harvard Business School,42 is a second learning method for gaining wisdom. A third is a problem-posing method, drawn from real life situations, designed by Paulo Friere.43 Properly used, these three methods can open up an educational system, and adapt themselves to all sorts of varied learning styles and situations. Integrated together with a project-based portfolio system, the combinations are almost inexhaustible.

The final element of the curriculum framework in the complex disciplines stage, is the real life part - the lifework section. We have been using this

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39 For information on purchasing packages of these resources published by Britannica, call LearnCorp at 515-292-6810.
41 Developed in chapter 1 of Paideia Program.
43 Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Education for Critical Consciousness, previously cited.
term throughout the paper. What exactly do we mean by forming a lifework plan? Why coin a new term? By lifework we are referring to a concept much bigger than your present job. A job is only part of your lifework. A profession is only part of your lifework. Paid work is only part of your lifework. By lifework we are referring to all of the work in your life, paid or unpaid, which you are doing because it relates to your overall purpose in life, and which increasingly matches with your God-given abilities and gifts. There should be a growing sense of purpose to our lifework, ever broadening horizons as we plan each unfolding phase. Our lifework should bring satisfaction and meaning to our lives, and be a big enough idea to sustain the thought at the end of each of our lives that our lives were well invested, and properly invested. Our lifework is the integrating element of our educational development. In order to get the full value out of this educational framework, then, this area of lifework must be taken very seriously as part of this complex disciplines stage. In some European educational systems, students are either placed on a university track or on a vocational, apprenticeship track around the “bar-mitzvah” age, based on their academic performance. In our system, everyone is placed on the academic track. Neither system is ideal, in the sense that all students need a combination of both tracks. In our educational framework, we need to take a fresh look at the concepts of apprenticeships, the starting of small businesses, and the experience of sustained work, as a vital part of the educational process during this stage. With careful planning, we can build this into our educational frameworks today. For example, with our son Jonathan we encouraged him to focus on getting straight B’s rather than straight A’s, and to use the time difference for work and ministry. When our lifework plan is integrated using the LearnCorp Life Development Portfolio, then the whole process reaches its peak integration point, and it all begins to make sense. What a goal! What a way to enter the world community!

3. The life development learning center

This final element of our church-based Christian education framework is what we are calling a Life Development Learning Center in the educational domain, and a Life Development University in the business domain. This concept could very well be a prototype of what our Christian schools and our home-schooling networks, may evolve into with the coming of age of the information society - whether we plan for change or not. Two key concepts must be kept clear as this idea of a life development learning center is adopted. First, it should be church-based at its core. And second, it should be made available to all children and young adults in the church or participating churches. That is, it should accommodate kids who are being home-schooled, who are in Christian schools or other private schools, and who are in the public school system. If done well, it can become the dominating influence in the Christian education process, and can shape children and families regardless of other existing influences. It can become our new Christian education paradigm.

For those who have their kids in public schools, it may be nothing more than a very high powered resource center for parents to use to get training to oversee the development of their kids, and a serious ordered faith development strategy for their children. For those home-schooling, it may provide additional structure and networks to facilitate a more complete
educational process. For Christian schools who are the most innovative, it may provide a way to break out of the old schooling paradigm, and move quickly into the new, emerging technological society, by taking the initiative to pioneer aspects of this new model.

Let me paint a possible scenario. Suppose that all committed to this system - participating Christian schools, private schools, and home-schooling networks - made a commitment to devote the morning of each day to the teaching and study of core knowledge for ages 6-12 stage, and the mastery of the complex disciplines in the ages 12-18 stage. The afternoons were made available for all different types of options. At the 6-12 stage, afternoons might be spent working on group projects (remember the science fair projects, the 4-H projects), gaining appropriate work experience, computer time for all the various forms of interactive learning, sports, very disciplined catechism training, community service, church work, assisting in day-care of elderly, small business ventures, etc. The afternoon staff, adjunct teachers if you will, could be made up of professionals, businessmen and women, pastoral staff members, professors, self-employed, homemakers, retirees, all sorts of adults from the workplace, who are willing to devote an afternoon or part of an afternoon a week to be part of this process. They could come to the resource center, or bring the older kids of this stage into their work environment if appropriate. At the 12-18 stage, a similar pattern could be followed, with the additional ingredient for all, to include some type of sustained work experience, possibly varied from year to year, or even semester to semester. Apprenticeships should be made available by participating professionals, businessmen and women, as well as opportunities to work in a family business, or even start a business of their own. Large, complicated case studies, or work projects could be pursued as well. Community and church volunteer work could be more substantive, and even include political involvement and causes. The point is to take the integrative element of the formation of lifework very seriously.

What are the core elements of such a Life Development Resource Center for Christian education? This new paradigm educational framework could be held together by the following core elements:

- a parent-based portfolio assessment system
- a strategy of all participants to a “core knowledge” approach to general educational development (regardless of schooling choice)
- an integrated lifework system - including apprenticeships, learning networks, a network of participating professionals, businessmen and women, etc.
- a comprehensive system of “adjunct” teachers
- a wisdom-based curriculum framework - paradigm seminars, framework process guides
- integrated resources - curricula, courses, seminars, CDs, tapes, and other resources integrated with the framework, available for rent or purchase
- a parent development strategy - including a comprehensive seminar system for each framework stage
- teacher, volunteer development system - coordination, training, portfolios, etc.
- computerized learning system and electronic library, which can support home-based computer centers
Building a New Partnership: Parents, Home and School

We need to begin with an understanding that our current system is fragmented, and needs to be reassessed by all parties involved: the parents, the churches, and the schools. The following is a set of guidelines designed to help get the process started.

Implications and Guidelines for Building a New Partnership:

1. All of us who are concerned with Christian education need to be aware that these are unprecedented times of change, and if we want to be fully effective in training our children and impacting the world in which we live, we need to build a new paradigm.

2. In the immediate future, churches, schools, and parents need to sit down, regardless of their relationships and together map out a short term integrated strategy which respects all of the above elements (church, home and school), maximizes the current strengths of each, and dissolves any existing tensions.

3. In addition, this church, home and school team ought to design and inaugurate a long term strategy which is bold, innovative and paradigmatic in nature, with the view of building a new paradigm for Christian education for their children, and their children’s children.

4. Finally, this church, home and school team needs to aggressively approach the Christian business community to engage them in this process, draw on their expertise, and build apprenticeships and learning partnerships, as well as empower them to become adjunct teachers at their own expense.

What will it take to make this work?

Existing schools need to recognize that the time is right for building dynamic new models for the future, and this process will involve more than adding a little text viewer on the top of a typewriter. Homeschooling movement leaders should think creatively to seize the opportunities provided by the times, and build partnering relationships with church and school leaders, if they want to play a significant role as innovators in Christian education. Pastors and church leaders need to take the initiative to build a comprehensive vision of Christian education, for if churches were leading out in Christian education as they should, and truly equipping men and women for full service in the world community, then integrated church-based models such as the one proposed in this paper would be popping up all over the country.
As I stated in the introduction to this paper, even though parts of it are technical and scholarly in nature, this is not a mere academic exercise for me. It is part of a vision and a process to which I have devoted 25 years of my life. And if God wills, I intend to see it fully realized. With this in mind, I make these final comments. At LearnCorp, we are committed to facilitating just such a process. We are involved in this process in our own church, and with other churches around the world. We offer paradigm seminars to churches, pastors and church leaders; Christian schools, colleges and seminaries; home-schooling networks and to Christian businessmen. In the future we will be offering a series of seminars on the LearnCorp Life Development Portfolios. In addition, we offer consulting services to those interested in building new models in Christian education. In the future we will be publishing several tools designed to assist church leaders, parents and teachers in building aspects of this model. And our intention is to publish the curricula described in the character and faith development sections of this guide, resources permitting, for use by parents and churches, respectively. Our materials are developed in tandem with BILD-International’s church-based leadership development curriculum, which is an excellent resource for churches to use in building the level of leadership capable of leading in such enterprises as the church-based Christian education strategy set forth in this paper.

And finally, we are asking God for a few teams of parents, church and school leaders, who over the next few years, backed by a team of investors, a foundation or two, and an excellent design firm, will pioneer with us in bringing this church-based, wisdom-based Christian education framework to maturity. These are exciting times - paradigmatic times. Times to dream bold dreams. Times to entrepreneur. Times to work very hard. Times to ask God to work mightily in our midst, and out of the wealth of our opportunity, to bless our children, and our churches.
NEW PARADIGMS FOR THE POST-MODERN CHURCH

Jeff Reed
President, LearnCorp
Presented at 1996 BILD International Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
May 9, 1996

PART II:
ADULTHOOD

INTRODUCTION:

This is the second part of a two-part series on church-based Christian education.¹ I did not plan to write either of these papers, because my focus has been more on theological education and missions. That still is my central passion. However, over the last three years, I have been thrust into areas that I now see I should have been giving far more attention to all along. I was actually working in these areas, with my own kids and in counseling others within our church, trying to establish them in the faith, but not at all with the rigor of these last three years. This paper (as did the first one on childhood and adolescence) has its own little story.

Now and then, when I am teaching a class, carrying on a conversation, or writing a course, a little question surfaces in the back of my mind, causing mild frustration. It occasionally would happen late Saturday nights as I was nearing the end of my message preparations. I knew the second it appeared that I was in for an “all-nighter.” The question told me that my whole message was on the wrong course, and that I had to rebuild it from scratch. That type of question surfaced when teaching BILD’s Ministry Priorities and Personal Management course a few years ago. I was trying to get all of us who were taking the course to see that all of our life goals could fit under the categories of individual household and the household of God. I remember very well—Don Erickson, one of our church leaders,

¹ This is actually the fifth of a six-part series now titled Paradigms for the Post Modern Church. The first paper, Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm, was delivered almost four years ago at the annual conference for the North American Professors for Christian Education (NAPCE). It was addressed mostly to Christian education professors and academic deans of graduate schools of theology, and in one sense, was seminal to the entire discussion of the five articles. It called the church to a whole new educational paradigm for educating its leaders. The companion to this paper, Church-Based Christian Education: Creating a New Paradigm—Part I: Childhood and Adolescence, was delivered at the 1995 Christian School Leadership Summit in Colorado Springs. The three together form a fairly complete treatise toward a comprehensive church-based Christian education paradigm. The remaining two were delivered at BILD-International’s annual conferences, in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The first, Church-Based Missions: Creating a New Paradigm, dealt with sweeping changes occurring in missions in breaking free from the residual effects of the colonial missions model, and the second, Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm dealt with the need to do theology afresh in culture, building upon a biblical theology base. The final paper in the paradigms series, entitled Church-Based Hermeneutics: Creating a New Paradigm, will be delivered in February, 1997 in Phoenix at the BILD-International annual international conference, and will deal with post-modern hermeneutical issues, and implications of electronic publishing on the life of the church. All place the local church at the center of the discussion. These can be ordered from LearnCorp, 1835 Meadow Glen Rd., Ames, IA 50014. Phone: 515-292-6810/Fax: 515-292-1933.
questioned how we could spend so much of our time in our lifework, and not even have a category for it. I think I knew then subconsciously that a new major problem on this church-based paradigm curve was surfacing and demanding to be solved. I had no idea how God would go about resurfacing that question, and bringing this major paradigm to the forefront of my thought. Only by being thrust out into the world of work more directly was I forced to think through the problem of the separation of our faith and church work, from the everyday work world of the committed believer. Only then was I motivated to begin rethinking the whole issue of adult Christian education. But before we begin building the paradigm boundaries of adult Christian education—which will lead to a total redesign—let’s look at the general paradigm shifts that are taking place in education and business today.

**Paradigm Shifts in Education and Business:**

The whole world of work is changing. Jobs as we know them are taking a radically different shape as we move from an industrial society of large corporations, organizations, and institutions to a downsized, ever-changing, technological society. One of the changes which will affect us most directly is the concept of everyone having a job—a traditional, full-time, with-benefits job. Two recent books have focused specifically on this part of the rapidly changing world. Both possess titles as radical as their contents:


Bridges very powerfully argues that we are entering a post-job era, which will bring about change as great as the shift from the pre-industrial to the industrial society. The concept of the full-time job paradigm regular hours, job descriptions, career paths, steady wages, raises, benefit packages, along with idioms such as *that’s not my job, get a good job, out of a job, just protecting my job* is a relatively new idea. It replaced the long-standing idea of the pre-industrial world, which viewed the world of work from a totally different framework. Work in the pre-industrial world was focused on the quality and reputation of one’s work doing good work, being responsible and industrious, being a skilled artisan, or a diligent worker. The focus was on the idea of *doing jobs* rather than having a job.

“Doing all your work for one employer, at a regular place and time, for a single salary, and containing your work life within a single entity called a job these are ideas that were brand-new in the nineteenth century. Before that, everyone had a composite career, although no one talked about such a commonplace fact. It would be hard to imagine Thomas Jefferson (planter, architect,
statesman, writer, inventor) and Benjamin Franklin (printer, postmaster, statesman, humorist, scientist) holding down jobs.”

Bridges predicts a new era—the post-job era—that in many ways will resemble aspects of the pre-industrial paradigm, plus all the possibilities of the post-industrial, technological society. Mostly because of enormous technological changes, the job paradigm will eventually break down in this era and a new framework will emerge. Even though the concept of the job paradigm is less than 200 years old, it is difficult for us to even imagine not holding a traditional job. The future will look something like the pre-industrial era since people will do many jobs rather than holding a single job. Some will say that this is only alarmist thinking, that the future is not likely to experience such a radical shift. Both Bridges and Rifkin, along with authors like Charles Handy and Peter Drucker, make a powerful case for the fact that we are in a time of great change. Listen to a few of their assertions:

Bridges:

“Because conventional jobs inhibit flexibility and speedy response to the threats and opportunities of a rapidly changing market, many organizations are turning over even their most important tasks to temporary and contract workers or to external vendors. That way, when conditions change outside the organization, there is no turf guardian inside whose livelihood depends on not changing how things are done.”

“Even after the job became a dominant work paradigm, upper-and lower-class people kept their composite careers[,] the latter because they needed them to survive, and the former because their mix of

**Figure 1**

**JobShift: Entering the Post-Job Era**

Adapted from William Bridges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Great JobShift</th>
<th>Second Great JobShift</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1780-1830</strong></td>
<td><strong>1990’s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preindustrial World</td>
<td>The New World of Jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-doing jobs</td>
<td>-having a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Post-Job Organization</td>
<td>-portfolio of jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3 *JobShift*, p.27.
leisure, social responsibility, and wide experience gave them multiple points of concern and influence. Only the middle class gave up the composite career, and today even they are returning to it.”

**Rifkin:**

“In the past, when new technologies replaced workers in a given sector, new sectors always emerged to absorb displaced laborers. Today, all three of the traditional sectors of the economy — agriculture, manufacturing, and service — are experiencing technological displacement, forcing millions onto the unemployment rolls. The only new sector is made up of a small elite of entrepreneurs, scientists, technicians, computer programmers, educators, and consultants. While this sector is growing, it is not expected to absorb more than a fraction of the hundreds of millions who will be eliminated in the next several decades in the wake of revolutionary advances in the information and communication sciences.”

“To begin with, more than 75 percent of the labor force in the most industrious nations engage in work that is little more than simple repetitive tasks. Automated machinery, robots, and increasingly sophisticated computers can perform many, if not most of these jobs. In the United States alone, that means that in the years ahead more than 90 million jobs in the labor force of 124 million are potentially vulnerable to replacement by machines . . . . Reengineering is sweeping through the corporate community . . . . Companies are quickly restructuring their organizations to make them computer friendly . . . . Michael Hammer, a former MIT professor and prime mover in the restructuring of the workplace, says that reengineering typically results in the loss of more than 40 percent of the jobs in a company and can lead to as much as 75 percent reduction in the given company’s workforce. Middle management is particularly vulnerable to job loss from reengineering, Hammer estimates that up to 80 percent of those engaged in middle-management tasks are susceptible to elimination . . . . By the time the first stage of reengineering runs its course, some studies predict loss of up to 25 million jobs in the private sector labor force that currently totals around 90 million . . . . Anderson Consulting Company, one of the world’s largest corporate restructuring firms, estimates that in just one service industry, commercial banking and thrift institutions, reengineering will mean a loss of 30 to 40 percent of the jobs over the next seven years. That translates into nearly 700,000 jobs eliminated.”

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1. *JobShift*, p. 115.
Charles Handy estimates that less than half of the workforce will be in “proper” jobs by the beginning of the twenty-first century, and many will be working out of their homes.

Handy:

“By some estimates, one-quarter of the working population will be working from home by the end of the century. From home is different than from at home. The home is the base not the prison. We can leave it. There will be organized work clubs, work centers, meeting rooms, and conference centers. We shall not be confined to our terminal in our little back room; there will be people to meet, places to go to, team projects, and group assignments. I work from home myself. I go out from it nearly every day, but almost always to a different place. It is not a lonely life.”

Handy goes on to envision this restructuring of work in the form of a new type of organization, which he calls the shamrock organization. He sees three primary types of work arrangements: the professional core (which parallels Rifkin’s elite information sector professionals), who are at the core of the new global organizations; the contractual fringe, who contract out their work; and the flexible labor force, who require some of the greatest creativity to thrive well in this new era. See figure 2.

Figure 2

The Shamrock Organization

By Charles Handy

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In their book, *Upsizing the Individual in the Downsized Organization*, Johansen and Swigart help us visualize, with statistics, the emerging reality of the new era which is quickly permeating the workforce (Figure 3). New work arrangements as they call them, will increasingly require a different approach from getting an education followed by a traditional job—one with regular hours, job descriptions, and benefit packages.9

**Figure 3**

**Growth of the Flexible Work Force**

By Johnson & Swigart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Traditional Workforce</th>
<th>New Work Arrangements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How are we to look at this whole situation? For some who are unprepared or unaware of the coming post-job era, it is viewed as a cruel and ruthless process which disrupts and often destroys lives. For others, it is viewed as a time of tremendous opportunity.

These realities are coming to pass even faster than the prophets themselves predicted. An extensive seven-part series appeared March 3-9, 1996, in *The New York Times* entitled “The Downsizing of America.” It provided a massive amount of information, which confirms the shifts predicted by Handy, Bridges, and Rifkin, and provided a look at some personal tragedies of lives and towns. This series can be downloaded free, including charts and pictures (at www.nytimes.com under Job Market / Special Report / Downsizing America).

Some of you in non-industrialized societies (much of the Two-Thirds world) may be asking how this applies to you? A very interesting and powerful theory is beginning to emerge concerning how this great jobshift will affect developing countries. Remember Joel Barker’s observations in his video *The Business of Paradigms*? “When a paradigm shifts, everything goes back to zero.” That is what many believe is happening. The jobshift is driven by the fast pace in which we are moving into the age of technology. To be successful we do not need large institutional facilities, especially things like office buildings and all of their trappings. Huge corporations like IBM and AT & T no longer need large centralized facilities. One of the problems is that the West has them and will be paying for them for a long time. The developing countries do not. The

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The irony is that many feel the developing countries do not need to go fully through the industrial age to get to the technological age, but instead they can jump right over it. In fact, all of the institutional paradigms of the West, produced in the industrial age, may slow down its transition into the new age, but the developing countries are free to build from the ground up and at a much faster pace. Joel Kotkin, in his groundbreaking book *Tribes: How Race, Religion and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy*, has demonstrated quite convincingly that a new global economy is emerging, and that huge international networks are being built. Most of them are from the Third World, especially India and the pacific rim. All hold to their traditional values, but are not encumbered by the *baggage* of Western industrial institutions.

The same thing is true in education. Our Western institutions are slowing us down. Not so in developing countries—unless of course they feel the need for these same archaic monoliths of culture for some ironic identity reason. Now let’s look briefly at new paradigms in education.

**NEW PARADIGMS IN EDUCATION**

Amidst the constant and dramatic changes in the corporate world[10] re-engineering, jobshift realities[10] it is easy to miss similar global changes in education. Business has bottom lines which bring about changes much earlier than in the educational system, which is funded by governments and communities. But radical changes are taking place in education as well. One of the best treatments on the magnitude of these cultural shifts and their implications on education, is set forth by Alan M. Thomas in his book *Beyond Education: A New Perspective on Society’s Management of Learning*. Thomas develops his argument that the formal educational system as we know it today arose from the industrial society, where uniformity was the standard and the need of the times. He believes that the educational system, as a management of learning system, is going to need to be restructured or reengineered, just like the corporate world. We need a new management of learning system that is compatible with the emerging technological society we are entering. Corporations need to become learning organizations;[11] schools need to become lifelong learning centers to fit the new educational needs of a changing society. Thomas suggests that the shift is inevitable, and that it can be made most smoothly by educational institutions that attach themselves to learning organizations.

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Careful perusal of contemporary literature on societal and cultural change surfaces a general sketch of this shift, from the formal education paradigm, developed within the industrial society, to the emerging learning center paradigm of the technological society. See figure 4. A grasp of these developing patterns is extremely helpful for guiding us in strategically planning our educational forms for the future. These parallels are by no means exhaustive, but rather occur frequently in the literature and the early models.

**Figure 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waning Paradigm</th>
<th>Emerging Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Formal, institutional structures</td>
<td>1. Nonformal, flexible structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Non-profit funding</td>
<td>2. For-profit discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Testing and degree system</td>
<td>3. Competencies and portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Institutional authority</td>
<td>5. Partnerships[] parents, business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. For service preparation dominates</td>
<td>6. In service preparation idealized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In-service training marginalized</td>
<td>7. In-service education integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Education for the young</td>
<td>8. Life development is the focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of this means that we must change how we think about our education. We can no longer assume that we can go to a university for four years and expect that knowledge to serve us for many years in a career. Aubrey and Cohen, in their book *Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations* make an astounding statement. They claim that knowledge today has a four-year half-life. That means that one half of our working knowledge today will be obsolete in four years, just in time to graduate from college. We have to change our mindset from four years of education for a lifetime of work, to a strategy of serious lifelong learning. Learning and the workplace must be wed as never before in history.

All of these changes have huge implications for the Christian education of adults. It is necessary for us to build new ways—in fact an entirely new paradigm—for educating Christian adults. What would be the elements of such a paradigm?

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ELEMENTS OF A NEW PARADIGM: CHURCH-BASED CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

PREMISE#1: Contemporary Christian education of adults is fragmented in that it does not take seriously an integrated, lifelong learning approach, and does not take seriously the lifework of each believer.

Christian education for adults is just as fragmented as it is for children. It, as well, is fragmented at two levels. First, there is the disassociation of our adult Christian education and our lifework. And second, there is an almost complete lack of serious, integrated ordered learning available for adults, unless you choose to go to a seminary.

1. Fragmentation of Christian education and our lifework

If you were to mention to the average believer in our churches today that he or she ought to engage in a serious, disciplined study of theology, he would probably reply something like this, “Why, I am not planning on becoming a minister.” How did this happen? It developed as we professionalized the ministry, and made the study of theology an academic discipline rather than an orientation of the soul for the purpose of acquiring wisdom, which all men need regardless of their lifework. The history of this development was masterfully traced in Edward Farley’s Theologia: The Unity and Fragmentation of Theological Education (which I treated in earlier papers). Theological study became synonymous with academia and preparation for the profession of “full-time ministry.” Once one decided not to pursue “full-time ministry,” the study of theology was no longer needed and serious ordered learning for adults was dropped. What was once understood to be a discipline that all men needed regardless of their work—enabling them to do their lifework with greater skill—became irrelevant. The professionalization of ministry is not the only reason, but probably the most all encompassing. Farley specifically drives home this point in a chapter entitled, “Can Christian Education Be Theological Education?” taken from his book The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and University. See the quote under “The Problem Defined” in figure 5, “The Problem Visualized: A Fragmented Christian Education Approach.”

2. Fragmentation of adult education curricula.

The professionalization of the ministry and theology has worked itself out in devastating ways within the life of the church. One of the most devastating has been the fragmentation of curricula itself. We no longer have a disciplined faith development track for Christian adults in our churches. Instead we have adult Sunday schools, Christian how-to books and seminars, Christian radio and small group study guides designed to be lead by facilitators who are usually without an ordered didache themselves.

We must develop an approach that takes seriously the need for ordered learning among adults. It must be disciplined, accurate, and attainable. We must convince every Christian within our churches of the need for becoming established in the core truths of the faith, and for beginning a
lifelong learning approach to the Christian life which will lead toward a mastery of the Scriptures. This disciplined ordered learning cannot be disassociated with life and work. The development of our faith must relate in every way to the work—the good occupations—to which God has called us (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:14).

**PREMISE #2: Christian education for adults must be church-based at its core**

We have used the term church-based throughout this paradigm series; indeed it appears in every title. Each time we try to put a nuance to the idea so that it might be understood more fully. As we examine adult education, we see that the church is again marginalized. The only serious theological ordered learning for young adults is Bible college, again which is not at all integrated with churches. In fact, outside of a Bible department and weekly chapel, there is very little difference between Bible colleges and private colleges.

Any serious ordered learning within the church is almost always found in the materials of highly organized para-church ministries with powerful agendas of their own. The problem is not in using material which fits our adult education goals as a church, but that the material is written in the context of a whole ministry which takes place outside the life of the church, on a different agenda from the church, and usually just gives a token nod to local church involvement in the materials. They are being written by people who do not understand the life of the local church as presented in the New Testament.

Again we will ask the question, what exactly do we mean by church-based? Primarily we mean that the local church is at the center of our paradigm, our ministry models, and our year-in and year-out practice of the ministry itself—whether that be missions, leadership training, counseling and shepherding, Christian education, or any other major ministry enterprise. The image church-housed versus church-based, which I discussed in my theological education paper, applies here as well. To often in our churches today, adult education programs are church-housed programs of para-church ministries. Their materials, which are not philosophically compatible with the church, become imbedded into our programs and the lives of our people for lack of our own well-thought-out and integrated adult Christian education program. The following definitions, slightly adapted from the first Christian education article, will serve as our working definitions.

*Church-Housed:* The adult education program is housed in the church building, but is really a philosophical hodge-podge of para-church training programs and material. There may be an occasional specialized class taught by a church member who is particularly motivated in one area but no serious integrated adult education plan.
The Problem Visualized:
A Fragmented Christian Education Approach

Figure 5

The Reality Visualized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning as a Child</th>
<th>Learning as a Young Adult</th>
<th>Learning as an Adult</th>
<th>Learning as an Older Adult</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience Today:</td>
<td>Experience Today:</td>
<td>Experience Today:</td>
<td>Experience Today:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• parental lectures</td>
<td>• fragmented Christian</td>
<td>• fragmented adult</td>
<td>• why bother, not needed</td>
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<td>• market-driven</td>
<td>• college</td>
<td>• Sunday school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday school</td>
<td>• fragmented youth</td>
<td>• how-to books</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• shallow family</td>
<td>• programs and adult</td>
<td>• Christian seminars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devotions</td>
<td>• Sunday school</td>
<td>• religious radio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fragmented</td>
<td>• discipleship programs</td>
<td>• programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian school</td>
<td>• Christian seminars</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious, integrated</td>
<td>Serious, integrated</td>
<td>Serious, integrated</td>
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<td>ordered learning:</td>
<td>ordered learning:</td>
<td>ordered learning:</td>
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<td>• none (nothing</td>
<td>• none (nothing available</td>
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<td>mitzvahs</td>
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</table>

The Problem Defined

"Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian learning - to historical-critical studies of the Bible, to the content and structures of the great doctrines, to two thousand years of classic works on the Christian life, to the basic disciplines of theology, biblical languages and Christian ethics? Why do bankers, lawyers, farmers, physicians, homemakers, scientists, salespeople, managers of all sorts, people who carry out all kinds of complicated tasks in their work and home, remain at a literalist, elementary school level in their religious understanding? How is it that high school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture? How is it possible one can attend or even teach in a Sunday School for decades and at the end of that time lack the interpretive skills of someone who has taken three or four weeks in an introductory course in Bible at a university or seminary?"

Edward Farley, in The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University (Fortress, 1998)

The Solution Proposed

The church must take seriously its responsibility to fully train believers in their faith - in the whole counsel of God, if they are to be expected to make significant contributions in the cause of Christ in the world and work in which they live. Individual households must take seriously the ordered learning of their children.
Church-Based: The adult education program is integrated with the life of the church and the needs of the adults in the church to be established in their faith, in their families, in the church family and in the world community, living productive lives and involved in good occupations.

There are only two basic concepts that need to be grasped in order to set the basic integration framework in place. They were presented in the first paper just as they are here. The first concept is that the individual household—the family—is the basic, core institution of the Christian education process. The overall responsibility of the paideia—the discipline and instruction, Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:18-2—of children is given to parents, especially fathers. These passages are part of the “household texts” of the New Testament epistles, which were a common form in Greek literature of the day.13 This is consistent with the Hebrew model and can be seen in such passages as Deuteronomy 6:6,7 and wisdom literature passages such as Proverbs 1-9 and 31.

The second concept is that the household of God—the local church family—is an extended household, a family of families. That is not just a metaphor, but a real truth. This can be seen throughout the New Testament epistles, but is probably laid out the clearest in the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. The organizing principle of these epistles is stated in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, where it states that the local church is the pillar and support of the truth, and that God has given instructions on how a community should order itself, just as He has for individual families. An example of how real God sees this family of families is this: He gives instructions that individual families are to take care of their own widows, and if they can’t, the local church family is to care for the widows in their midst who are in need (1 Timothy 5:8ff). These epistles are full of instructions from the assumed framework that the church is a family of families—a true community.

Building upon these fundamental concepts, the local church organizes community enterprises however it wishes, under the oversight of a council of household heads, referred to in the epistles as pastors, elders, church leaders, etc. The problem today is that most leaders in churches are not well established themselves (refer back to Farley’s quote in figure 2). They were not part of a generation that was seriously trained in the core teachings of the apostles, in biblical theology, in the classics of the Christian faith, and in how to deal biblically with contemporary cultural problems. Consequently, they cannot put together a high-level, well-ordinated, integrated, and lifelong adult Christian education program. Our programs, rather than being church-based, are in reality a philosophical and theological cafeteria. Our churches, rather than being a unified family, with one mind striving together for the progress of the gospel, are often really made up of theologically and philosophically incompatible fragments sewn

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13 Several early church scholars dealt extensively with the household texts of the pastoral epistles. The most useful at this point is The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles, by David C. Verner (Scholars Press, 1983). Verner demonstrates convincingly that 1 Timothy 3:14-16 is the organizing center of the pastoral epistles, and that Paul understood himself to be giving “household guidelines” for local churches, just as he gave “household guidelines” for individual families in Ephesians 5:18-6:4.
together by a building, a Sunday service, a few close friends, and the particular para-church programs that we like.

Whatever our program, it must respect the household—the house order God has set forth—which few of our contemporary ministry paradigms do. Rarely, if ever, have I seen a comprehensive model which fully integrates the serious adult Christian education each believer needs with his or her lifework, and in a manner that is philosophically and theologically consistent. There is a tremendous need for an integrated model. We desperately need an overall framework.

**PREMISE #3: Christian education for adults must be wisdom-based throughout its infrastructure.**

As in the first Christian education paper for children, once we assume the church-based premise—that the local church is the context for building an integrated Christian education program—we then have to ask from a biblical theology vantage point, where is the best place to begin building the infrastructure of an adult education program? The answer is our education literature—the wisdom literature.

Two things emerge from the wisdom literature, which apply to building an adult education program. First, education is lifelong. Wisdom literature calls for a lifelong commitment to the pursuit of wisdom. Second, it fully integrates our lifework, at every stage of our lives. Let’s look at these two things in order:

*First, from a wisdom perspective, adult education involves the lifelong pursuit of wisdom.* Ancient wisdom literature gets right to the heart of this point. It calls for every individual to become committed to the lifelong pursuit of wisdom. Without this commitment, right from the very early stages of our lives, it is impossible to live a skillful life. The essence of wisdom’s call to a lifelong pursuit of wisdom is this:

One leading a skillful life is developing a habit of lifelong learning, and consistently applying and integrating what is being learned, which leads to the development of character.

This is the essence of education. Listen to the following call for wisdom, by a father, to a son emerging into adulthood:

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;
Love her and she will watch over you.
The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom;
And with all your acquiring, get understanding. Proverbs 4:5-7

This lifelong pursuit is to continue throughout adulthood. Proverbs 1:1-7 paints a lifelong picture—the youth (naïve) need wisdom, and the wise need to become wiser. So whatever our strategy, it must encompass the whole span of life. (See wisdom chart). There is also great precedence in Jewish
culture based on the wisdom literature. In the Talmud, finalized around 400 AD, in “The Sayings of the Fathers,” it talks of the “ages of man”:

- 5 years is for reading (Scripture);
- 10 for Misnah (the laws);
- 13 for Commandments (Bar Mitzvah, moral responsibility);
- 15 for Gemara (Talmudic discussions, abstract reasoning);
- 18 for Hupa (wedding canopy);
- 20 for seeking a livelihood (pursuing an occupation);
- 30 for attaining full strength (“Koah”);
- 40 for understanding;
- 50 for giving counsel;
- 60 for becoming an elder (wisdom, old age);
- 70 for white hair;
- 80 for Gevurah (new, special strength of old age);
- 90 for being bent under the weight of the years;
- 100 for being as if almost dead and passed away from the world.  

Second, wisdom literature paints a picture of education, which fully integrates with lifework. Let’s examine the lifework idea in the context of a normal life span, beginning with childhood and adolescence:

1. Wisdom’s Focus in Childhood and Adolescence: Developing a Good Work Ethic and Being a Responsible Steward

The emphasis for the young is on a good work ethic, personal discipline, and learning to be a good steward of resources[]. possessions, money, etc. Listen to the following proverbs which address youth in one form or another:

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.
He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely,
But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully. 10:3,4

I passed by the field of the sluggard,
And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense;
And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles,
Its surface was covered with nettles,
And its stone wall was broken down.
When I saw, I reflected upon it;
I looked, and received instruction.
“A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest,”
Then your poverty will come as a robber,
And your want like an armed man. 24:30-34

At an early age, it is important that we learn how to do diligent work, even when we do not feel like it. Good discipline habits and a work ethic must come early. Our children must learn to work hard in

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14 This particular arrangement was taken from The Seasons of a Man’s Life, by Daniel Levinson (Ballantine, 1978), p. 325.
season, and work hard at the everyday things that keep property and possessions working well and looking sharp. This is all part of the wisdom tradition. Today, our children are entertained through childhood and adolescence, rather than taught to do helpful and meaningful work. We cannot expect our children to all of a sudden just birth a good work ethic when they turn 18. Wisdom’s exhortation: it must be modeled for them and built into them.

2. Wisdom’s Focus in Early Adulthood: Working Hard and Building Financial Foundations

The emphasis in early adulthood must be on working hard and building good financial foundations. Listen to the following proverbs, which have particular relevance to young adults:

An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning,  
Will not be blessed in the end.  20:21

He who tills the land will have plenty of food,  
But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.  28:19

In all labor there is profit  
But mere talk leads only to poverty.  14:23

Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man,  
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.  20:17

Prepare your work outside,  
And make it ready for yourself in the field;  
Afterwards, then, build your house.  24:27

There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more,  
And there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want.  
The generous man will be prosperous,  
And he who waters will himself be watered.  11:24,25

It is crucial at this stage in life to lay good foundations based upon hard work—the earlier the better. It is easy to go after too much talk[] things of great interest but which do not help lay these foundations[] and put too much emphasis on a comfortable lifestyle. What we need early on, are good financial foundations. We must avoid trying to accumulate wealth in a hurry, creating a comfortable home too quickly, and spending too much time learning and talking about our future work rather than doing it. In our modern Western culture, with our preoccupation with formal education, we often do not get to any significant work until well into our early adulthood stage, and then often with considerable debt. A good work ethic should land us on the other side of any formal schooling, with very little, if any, debt. In light of the four-year half-life of knowledge, our formal schooling should be put into perspective. The ability to learn anywhere ought to be far more carefully wed to our actual work, and our plan for regular lifelong learning given more serious attention. Except in a few
professions, college education offers far less security than it used to, and in many cases, far less than someone who has a passion for his work, combined with a passion to learn. Very early in our lives, we must also develop a generous spirit, and a habit of giving to others[] to our community of faith and to good causes. We can never expect to prosper without that kind of spirit.

3. Wisdom’s Focus in Middle Adulthood: Prospering in Work and Deepening Financial Foundations

The emphasis in middle adulthood must be on the most prosperous elements of our work, and on deepening our financial foundations. The following proverbs have particular relevance to those in middle adulthood:

By wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
And by knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches. 24:3,4

Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will stand before kings,
He will not stand before obscure men. 22:29

The plan of the diligent will lead to advantage,
But everyone who is hasty comes to poverty. 21:5

In this stage, we begin to work more wisely. We have had enough experience to know where our abilities lie, and enough experience in work and life to focus on areas where we are most likely to make the greatest impact. The more skill that we develop in our significant areas of work, the more likely we will stand before people who want our skills, and who will be in a position to move us into areas where we can have a greater impact, and consequently enjoy greater prosperity. The house that is prosperous though, is not just one which is lucky. According to the wisdom model, we must be developing wisdom, and using that wisdom to build a successful plan. That will give us the advantage we need. In these jobshift days, we need to be very wise. So often people at this stage are laid off by their employers. Even though they have a vast amount of experience, they have not made themselves irreplaceable. First of all, they demand much more money than those who are just starting out. Maybe they have not kept up with technology, nor kept learning in general. They have not looked for ways to reengineer themselves within the company, or others ways to market their skills and abilities. Those who are following the wisdom tradition will recognize that to prosper at this stage, they will have to become very skillful in their work, and very wise in their choices, if their household is going to prosper.

4. Wisdom Focus in Later Adulthood: Mentoring, Writing and Enabling Others
The emphasis in later adulthood must be mentoring, writing, and
enabling others. These last proverbs have particular relevance to those
in later adulthood:

A righteous man who walks with integrity,
How blessed are his sons after him. 20:7

A gray head is a crown of glory,
It is found in the way of righteousness. 16:31

The glory of young men is their strength,
And the honor of old men is their gray hair. 20:29

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children,
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. 13:22

In the wisdom model, those in later adulthood have the greatest
opportunity to use their lifework and its fruit to its fullest advantage.
In younger days, glory is in working hard, in strength. In later
adulthood, glory is in great wisdom\[ skill in using our lifework and
its resultant prosperity to enable and empower others to invest their
lives in purposeful and prosperous ways. The Hebrew concept of gray
hair is great strength of mind, of perspective, as opposed to the great
physical strength of young men. The man who follows the wisdom
way is one who will honor those closest to him; will see his prosperity
in its fullest form following him and resting on his children; and will
be in a life position that enables him to leave an inheritance even to his
children’s children. In this changing world of work, we must be
motivated to build our contemporary education and lifework strategies
firmly upon the foundation of the wisdom tradition.

It should be noted that these are just a few of the work, education, and
finance verses found in the book of Proverbs. There are literally scores of
them relating to this subject. LearnCorp has created an extensive guide to
the wisdom literature, especially Proverbs, which is entitled the Fourth
Generation Life Cycle System. This is an excellent tool to guide you in
your own lifework pursuits, and to use in building wisdom foundations
into the lives of your children resulting in blessings to the fourth
generation.

An adult education program that skillfully puts these two wisdom pillars
together—lifelong learning and lifework focus—will bring a “Queen of
Sheba” type of response by all observing today. The more she observed of
Solomon’s wisdom, the more she marveled.

Now we are in a position to construct a model based upon the New
Testament understanding of the church as a family of families, and the Old
Testament wisdom tradition—which together supply the essential elements
of a biblical framework for adult Christian education.
THE BASIC FRAMEWORK—CHURCH-BASED/WISDOM-BASED
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

THE BASIC FRAMEWORK

In building the framework, we are following very simple developmental
divisions of early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later adulthood.
These, we believe, are consistent with the wisdom literature model, and
with sound contemporary developmental research. In figure 6, “A
Church-Based/Wisdom-Based Christian Education Framework,” we have
attempted to visualize a model which takes into account all the elements
discussed up to this point—biblical data, contemporary research, and the
paradigmatic changes of the cultural times.

In each division, we attempt to follow the emphasis of Scripture, both of
the wisdom literature and the New Testament teaching on the centrality of
the church. When both of these aspects are understood, it makes the
developmental framework relatively easy to understand. The following is a
description of the basic framework summarized into three core goals
capturing the central task of each stage:

Early Adulthood:
I need to become well established in the core teaching of the faith,
build a solid family, and lay solid lifework foundations.

Middle Adulthood:
I need to transition my children into adulthood, serve skillfully in
the church, and focus on the main body of my lifework.

Later Adulthood
I need to leave a living heritage, be a resource to the community of
faith, and fully complete my lifework.

15 This developmental framework is based on the work of Daniel Levinson in his famous
book, The Season’s of a Man’s Life (Ballantine Books, 1973). Levinson is Jewish and it shows
in his research.
## A Church-Based/Wisdom-Based Christian Education Framework

### Adulthood

#### Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17-22</th>
<th>35-45</th>
<th>57-65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Adulthood</strong></td>
<td><strong>Middle Adulthood</strong></td>
<td><strong>World Community Member</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I need to become well established in the core teachings, build a solid family and lay solid lifework foundations”</td>
<td>“I need to transition my children into adulthood, serve skillfully in the church and focus on the main body of my lifework”</td>
<td>“I need to leave a living heritage, be a resource to the community of faith and full complete my lifework”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Development Portfolio:</td>
<td>Life Development Portfolio</td>
<td>Life Development Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• timeline/SIMA</td>
<td>• timeline</td>
<td>• timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• life development guides (early adulthood supplements)</td>
<td>• life development guides (middle adulthood supplements)</td>
<td>• life development guides (later adulthood supplements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• strategic life plan</td>
<td>• strategic life plan</td>
<td>• strategic life plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Framework</td>
<td>Curriculum Framework</td>
<td>Curriculum Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• character (basic training: family, people, money, etc.)</td>
<td>• character (values development: purpose, crises, older children, etc.)</td>
<td>• character (complex problems &amp; tasks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ministry (core teachings)</td>
<td>• ministry (biblical theology)</td>
<td>• ministry (theology in culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• education/work (core knowledge, work experience)</td>
<td>• education/work (advanced knowledge, main body of work)</td>
<td>• education/work (integrative knowledge &amp; crowning lifework)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Life Development Learning Center:
- portfolio system
- integrated courses & seminars
- apprenticeships, mentoring system, learning networks
- curriculum, resources & publications – newsletter/journal
- computerized learning system & electronic library

#### Note:
This all takes place in a health church-based context:
- Oversight of mature family heads, a team of elders
- Solid preaching & teaching
- Small group fellowships
- One another ministry, open use of spiritual gifts
- Older men/women mentors
Some may argue that specific evangelism training is needed directly in the framework. That may be, but it is assumed that becoming established in the core teaching implies an ability to share that faith with non-believers as the opportunity presents itself. It also assumes that establishing a family and faithfully fulfilling one’s lifework will put a person in a daily life-on-life context for modeling and sharing his faith.

With these general brushstrokes in place, what are the core elements of a church-based/wisdom-based Christian education framework? Similar to the framework proposed in the previous article on Christian education for childhood and adolescence, we are proposing three core elements—a life development portfolio, a curricula framework, and a resource center approach. Let’s look at each element in detail:

**THE CORE ELEMENTS**

1. **Life Development Portfolio**

The life development portfolio idea is designed around a few basic concepts. The most fundamental concept is that each individual must develop a personal strategy for lifelong learning, especially in this time of transition from an industrial to an information society. The portfolio system is designed to facilitate this process. It is built to support the following tenets:

- Each individual must take seriously the lifelong learning process.
- This process is developmental in nature—we all move through basic stages in life.
- All aspects of our lives need to be integrated into one whole.
- Learning must not be confused with schooling—learning being lifelong.
- Work is being redefined today, requiring each to build a portfolio of multiple services.
- Few tools are available to help us see our whole lives—its stages and its different elements—in one big picture, and then help us integrate them into one complete picture.
- Responsible parenting, and grand-parenting, demand a deep commitment to guiding the developmental process of our children.
- Responsible leadership demands facilitating the developmental process of those in our corporations, organizations, schools, and churches.

The portfolio, then, needs to be an integrative tool designed to guide us in developing and monitoring a lifelong learning strategy. It needs to be built around basic developmental stages, based in the great wisdom traditions, and backed up by the contemporary research of developmentalists such as Kohlberg and Piaget. It needs to be a comprehensive tool, built around several basic tools, such as a life development time line, which can easily be personalized and made as simple or complex as the user desires. It needs to be a place to keep track of our development, or perhaps, keep our development on track.
The concept goes beyond the individual. We must become a society of lifelong learners. A concept that has become very popular in the 1990’s is “the learning organization.” Organizations, schools, and other institutions must become learning organizations in order to survive and be fully productive in these changing times. In a sense, organizations have a life cycle of their own, and thus need a developmental strategy as well.

**The need for life development portfolios:** The need for a learning tool such as a life development portfolio can be seen from several angles. Our whole world is changing. New paradigms are emerging at phenomenal speeds in both business and education. Due to the rapid acceleration of the information, technological society, our education can be out of date before we finish the program we have entered. New skills are required almost daily to survive in the new work force which Peter Drucker has aptly named “knowledge workers.”

We now have a rapidly expanding knowledge base available to us via the computer, modem, internet, and CDs. Huge corporate databases and university libraries are accessible from our living rooms. Society’s new capital is fast becoming that of knowledge. We must learn how to carefully negotiate travel on this information highway so that we can safely and effectively get where we are going in our education, work, and most importantly, our personal lives.

This leads to the most important reason for a system such as the life development portfolio. Knowledge, facts, and information are not the substance from which success, skillful and fulfilling work, and a productive life are made. The skillful use of new knowledge in our work and life is absolutely essential. This is called wisdom, literally defined as “skill in living.” We can have all the knowledge in the world at our fingertips, but if we have no purpose; if our work is not integrated into our lives in a balanced and meaningful way; if our children and grandchildren are not developing in a healthy and productive way; if our marriages and personal relationships are not healthy and satisfying; then all of this new knowledge capital is really counterfeit goods.

We need a tool[] a system[] to help guide us down this new information super highway in a skillful way. We must fully draw upon traditional wisdom’s “wisdom path,” keeping all elements of our life in balance and on a healthy developmental course, if we are to live healthy, productive, and meaningful lives.

**Portfolios in education:** The idea of folios, or portfolios in most research, has become a very important issue in education. This folio/portfolio issue in education is an issue of assessment. For a long time educators have been aware that we need far more than a grading system for assessing how we are progressing in formal educational programs. One of the most respected educational theorists, Howard Gardner of Harvard’s prestigious Graduate School of Education, has long talked in his project Zero, of process-folios which can greatly aid in the development and assessment of children in the educational process. The Association for the Supervision of Curriculum
Development (ASCD) devoted an entire issue (May, 1992, www.ascd.org) of their Educational Leadership magazine to portfolio assessment in schools. One of the best summaries of the research of adult education is found in Experiential Learning: A New Approach, edited by Lewis Jackson and Rosemary Cafarella (Jossey-Bass, 1992), which is part of the brilliant New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education quarterly monograph series. It has two key chapters, one on building a folio and one on portfolio construction. The basic idea, is that one should develop a folio as he or she moves through a particular educational program or process, and construct a portfolio at different times along the way for the purpose of demonstrating levels of progress.

Portfolios in business: The concept of portfolios is not new to the business world. Businessmen have investment portfolios, artists and architects have portfolios of their work. As both work and education go through radical changes as we move into the information society, the concept is taking on new dimensions. In the Age of Unreason, Charles Handy calls for developing work and marriage portfolios, becoming what he calls “portfolio people.” If we are going to become knowledge workers committed to the lifelong, continuous learning needed in the new technological society as well as remain balanced in all areas of life, we must have a tool which is wisdom-based, and oriented to help coordinate our needed learning with all areas of our lives. The portfolio system is designed to be just that sort of tool. Handy also talks about “portfolio work,” in which we build a portfolio of jobs and skills to use in marketing ourselves in the coming post-job era. Truly the concept of folios/portfolios has come of age, both in education and business.

Ingredients of a life development portfolio system: What sorts of things ought to be included in a life development portfolio system? When one takes into consideration the emphases of wisdom literature, the paradigm changes in education and business, and the overall paradigm changes in culture, the following ingredients surface:

- a grasp of God’s overall plan
- a personal vision for your lifework
- a timeline of your personal story
- an assessment of your unique gifts and abilities
- an understanding of your roles and responsibilities
- a strategic plan for your education and lifework
- an overall strategic life plan
- a way of learning and gaining wisdom day by day

The life development portfolio concept is the first core element of a new paradigm for Christian education. If we are going to build a serious, ordered learning, Christian education plan that is individualized, lifelong, and integrates with our general education and lifework, we need a tool like a life development portfolio. At LearnCorp we have developed the 7th Priority Life Development Portfolio. It builds all of the above elements into a comprehensive and flexible resource designed to serve as an engine to
building a comprehensive church-based/wisdom-based Christian education program.16

2. The Life Development Curricula Framework

It is important to have a sense of the overall areas of training needed before choosing a specific curricula. Too often we attempt to plug in programs, courses, seminars and sometimes an entire curriculum without having a sense of an overall training framework. The chart on the next page (figure 7 “Wisdom-Based Life Development Curriculum”) visualizes all of the key ingredients of a comprehensive curriculum for adult Christian education from a church-based/wisdom-based perspective which has been developed in the premise section of this paper. We have continued the curricula framework we began in the church-based Christian education article for childhood and adolescence. It would be helpful to read the curricula framework section in that article at the same time you read this to gain a full sense of the framework. The ideas here build on those in the first article.

Character development: In this section the wisdom literature sets the framework. We have designed it to parallel the developmental needs of each stage of adulthood. In early adulthood the focus is on the basic areas of life. The main clusters of life skills center around five major areas:

- character/habits of lifelong learning
- work, honesty and money
- home, wife, children
- people, work, conflicts
- community, authority, justice

The idea behind this stage is that we need to grasp all the basic areas of life in early adulthood. As life progresses, the issues and problems grow more complex. Thus in middle adulthood the focus moves from basic training to values development. This parallels the time in life when our children will be going through their teen years and we will need to be helping them develop their values. It is also the time, as we move through the middle of our lives, that our own values go through a time of re-evaluation. Thus the focus is on an understanding of the wisdom books which focus on meaning and purpose, processing life and its crises, and the cultivation of romantic love in marriage. As we move from middle to later adulthood, issues, challenges, and problems in our lives become even more complex. Still building on the earlier foundations, we now need to master the more complex clusters of the proverbs. This is not intended to be a course of

16 Call LearnCorp, 515-292-6810, for a free brochure on the 7th Priority Life Development Portfolio and seminar.
### Wisdom-Based Life Development Curriculum Framework

**Adulthood**

**Figure**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Adulthood</th>
<th>Middle Adulthood</th>
<th>Late Adulthood</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT</strong> (Hebrew Wisdom Literature)</td>
<td><strong>PROVERBS: BASIC TRAINING</strong></td>
<td><strong>WISDOM LITERATURE: VALUES DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
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<td>Kohlberg</td>
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<td><strong>CORE TEACHINGS</strong> (First Principles)</td>
<td><strong>BIBLICAL THEOLOGY</strong> (Mastery of Scriptures)</td>
<td><strong>THEOLOGY IN CULTURE:</strong> (Mastery of Life)</td>
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<td>(Establishing Series I)</td>
<td>Gospels Acts &amp; Pauline Epistles General Epistles Johannine Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(Establishing Series II)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAITH DEVELOPMENT</strong> (The Great Theological Education)</td>
<td><strong>CORE KNOWLEDGE &amp; LIFEWORK</strong></td>
<td><strong>MASTER KNOWLEDGE &amp; LIFEWORK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION &amp; LIFEWORK DEVELOPMENT</strong> (The Great Conversation)</td>
<td><strong>MASTER WISDOM &amp; LIFEWORK</strong></td>
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</table>
study as much as just pointing out the types of issues to major on in different stages of life. It is probably better to think of the wisdom aspect of this training as both progressive and cyclical. To help us cycle progressively through the wisdom literature as an infrastructure to our character and moral development, we have created an additional tool, which we call the 4th Generation Life Cycle System. It is a tool to help us cycle through this wisdom process during the different stages of life. The idea behind this resource centers around the vision of beginning a process which will reverberate at least four generations into the future.17

Faith Development: In this section the major problem is fragmentation. There is no longer a sense of serious, ordered learning for Christian adults, no catechisms. J. I. Packer’s exhortation to the contemporary evangelical church is very appropriate at this juncture.

One great need today is a renewal of systematic Christian instruction-catechetical teaching for adults. It need not be called that, nor take the form of rigid drilling ... but somehow or other, opportunities must be given for folk in or just outside the churches to examine the Christian essentials, because there are so many for whom this is a prime need.18

Instead we are filled with market-driven, fragmented small-group studies lead by facilitators rather than serious, ordered learning resources which are well integrated and span a length of time necessary to lay lifelong foundations in the Scriptures. The process of faith development encouraged in this paradigm is one which unfolds throughout our lifetimes. The process includes the following goals:
- early adulthood—major on the core principles of the faith
- middle adulthood—major on mastering the Scriptures
- later adulthood—major on mastering life

Let’s walk through this framework quickly.19 In early adulthood, the emphasis ought to be on the “first principles” of the faith (Colossians 2:6-8). In the early church these were called the kerygma, Greek for proclamation (the essentials of the gospel) and the didache, Greek for teaching (the essentials of the apostles’ teaching). These truths taught by the apostles to the churches in the New Testament should provide us with a framework for setting the course of our lives. The framework involves these elements:
- individual identity in Christ
- family
- local church
- mission in the world

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17 The 4th Generation Life Development Portfolio is another LearnCorp life development resource. It is integrated with the 7th Priority Life Development Portfolio. For a brochure on the system and accompanying seminar call LearnCorp at 515-292-6810.
19 For a thorough treatment of this process, see my paper Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm.
This core teaching needs to be mastered by every Christian. We have
developed two resources to help accomplish the mastery of these first
principles. The first is a four volume series, produced for BILD-
International, entitled The Establishing Series, designed to establish each
believer in his or her faith. The second resource is BILD’s Leadership I
series—15 courses all built upon establishing churches at every level,
consistent with the first principles. A combination of these courses can
easily span across early adulthood, and is an integrative framework for all
other training which may be implemented for believers in this stage of life.

When we move into middle adulthood the emphasis is on mastering the
Scripture. Here the Old and New Testament both come into view. Few
people set out to master the Scriptures, yet it ought to be the goal of every
believer. We are not just talking about learning information. The idea is to
do biblical theology—which in essence means to let Scripture unfold by
itself, by book and author, allowing it to surface and reveal its own themes
and issues. Only after going through this process can we confidently
address all the issues of our lives and the culture in which we live from a
biblical point of view. Any adult training program should have an ordered
plan for each believer to master the Scriptures themselves over an extended
period of time. BILD’s Leadership Series II (4 Old Testament and 4 New
Testament courses) is designed to provide the infrastructure for such an
integrated program.

The later adulthood stage focuses on mastering life, which involves taking
all of life’s challenges, presenting issues, and problems and fully
integrating them with our faith. If properly prepared by mastering the
Scriptures over an extended period of life, we will have opportunities (not
previously recognized) to make a very significant contribution to the
church, both local and at large, even though we’re not “theologically
trained.” In addition, this base of understanding of our faith will aid us in
training our children, and in mastering the lifework that God has given us
to do. Any adult Christian education program ought to provide
opportunity for those in the later adulthood stage to engage in the serious
process of doing theology in culture. This leads us to the final element of
our curriculum framework.

Education and Lifework Development: In this section the issue is not
fragmentation as much as a complete separation. The church offers very
little training and assistance in helping people identify, develop, and excel
in their own lifework. Christian work is understood to be work in the
church, not our own lifework as it unfolds in the workplace and community
life. This must change. We must develop Christian education programs in
our churches that are integrated with our general education and lifework.
Throughout this paper we have referred to lifework. What exactly do we
mean by this? It is a concept larger than our career, though it includes our
paid work. In Ephesians 2:10, it is stated that as believers we were all
created for good works. We are each given natural abilities and spiritual
gifts. And we are all to engage in good occupations—Titus 3:14. In other
words, each of us ought to have a growing sense throughout our lives of our calling—a growing sense of the work, the total work, for which God has created us. No part of our lives should be fragmented from our faith. The church must fully address and assist every believer in his or her lifework. The final section of our Christian education wisdom-based life development curriculum is our education and lifework development. How should we equip Christians to think about their education and lifework? How should we assist them in their overall development? Again, we build off the wisdom framework, and use it to help us think clearly about our education and lifework development at each stage of life:

Early adulthood—focus on core knowledge and our lifework  
Middle adulthood—focus on mastering knowledge and our lifework  
Later adulthood—focus on mastering wisdom and our lifework

Early in our adult lives, by necessity, our lifework and its accompanying education has to be somewhat general. We have had very little experience. Though our work may be on a very specific course, the education must be somewhat general because every area in life has first principles to be learned before we can become skilled masters. As we enter middle adulthood and gain more experience, we can go on to master specific areas of specialty in our lifework. Yet, we must all progress beyond becoming skillful masters to a wisdom stage in life. We need to develop an ability to think principled and creatively in the specialty areas of our lifework, and become wise in the general work of our lives which we share in common with others in later adulthood—especially in mentoring and heritage matters. The wisdom literature also provides a general framework for thinking about work as well:

Early adulthood—working hard, gaining experience  
Middle adulthood—convergence, working skillfully  
Later adulthood—mentoring others, enabling others, our crowning lifework, possible a second body of lifework

A comprehensive Christian education training program must include appropriate training in how to think about and develop lifework in all of its stages. For example, in early adulthood, we ought to provide training in a work ethic; in middle adulthood in mastering work yet keeping life in balance; and in the later adulthood stage, we ought to be providing training on such issues as heritage matters, mentoring skills and developing a personal life message. Moreover, it should all be integrated. Finally, we need to address the great questions of life as they surface in the world in which we live, in order to provide substantive answers to those amongst whom we work and live. The Great Books of the Western World (Britannica) is an excellent tool to aid us as we move through the journey of life—both as a general education supplement, and as an apologetic aid. See my Christian education paper on childhood and adolescence for a complete explanation of this resource.
To set this framework in motion, we have created a simple two-year program which we call Leadership 2005. This program brings all three elements together.

Leadership 2005

- character development—4th Generation Life Cycle System
- faith development—The Establishing Series
- education and lifework development—7th Priority Life Development Portfolio

3. The Life Development Resource Center

The final core element of this paradigm is what I am calling a life development resource center. In light of the paradigmatic times in which we live, churches need to have a plan for responding to the equipping needs of believers.

What sorts of things should make up this life development resource center approach? No one knows for sure; we will have to create them as we go, as we move up the paradigm curve. However, from our study thus far of both the culture and Scripture, several elements seem to be key for such a church-based center.

Elements of a church-based Christian education resource center:

- a portfolio system of some type
- integrated courses and seminars
- apprenticeships, mentoring system, learning networks
- integrated curricula
- a computerized learning system and electronic library

The detailed vision for such a center must be saved for another paper or two. However, it does not take much imagination to envision how the church could develop a cutting edge ministry to its own people, as well as a natural bridge out into the non-believing community at its very point of need. Is job placement, welfare recovery, and prison and parole portfolio assistance likely to be a large need in the future?

Where does this all lead us? What are the challenges with which we are left after such an exhausting study?

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20 A brochure explaining this program and seminar is available from the LearnCorp Leadership Center.
BUILDING A NEW VISION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: PREPARING CHRISTIANS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Several insights must converge at one time amongst leaders in a church and amongst partnering churches in order to begin the long-term initiatives needed to build this new vision. The insights and vision can be summarized as follows.

THE CORE OF THE VISION:
1. These are exciting times for educators of every type and they provide a special opportunity for Christian educators. To be effective in the new world which we are entering, we must be willing to build new paradigms from the ground up.
2. In the immediate future, pioneering churches need to take the lead in prototyping new, truly church-based, Christian education learning/resource centers. They should begin to build alliances with key Christian businessmen and women, and with innovative schools. (Kotkin’s global tribes concept)
3. A bold and innovative, long-term strategy needs to be developed which draws on the emerging models, a strategy which even affects how we plan our church buildings of the future.
4. Finally, churches need to take very seriously what Marvin Olasky, in his paradigmatic book The Tragedy of American Compassion, calls the church to do. We must be ready to respond to the tremendous need of people left in the dust as the society shifts: mothers on welfare, the homeless, parolees and the millions who are displaced and confused in the wake of the great upheaval as we shift to a global economy.

These are exciting times. They are challenging times. If properly understood, they are times of unparalleled opportunity. Let’s ask God to raise up a generation of visionary church leaders to lead us in pioneering our way into the 21st century—leaders with the clarity of vision, the soundness of doctrine, and the fearless resolve of our first century mentors.
It is absolutely essential, at this point in history, for the church to understand the times in which it is living. Major shifts of a paradigmatic nature are taking place in almost every sphere of life. Business, education and government are all going through major "reengineering". The technological age is rapidly reshaping how we work, learn, train our kids and go about all sorts of service and ministry. New terms dominate the academic conversation, such as post-modern, post-enlightenment and post-critical, all attempting to describe the new era which is dawning upon human history. New age movements, global village concepts and international networks fill our newspapers and airways. Communications systems are redefining our concept of everything from office complexes to libraries to international trade. We are entering a new era. Listen to Peter Drucker, a leading analyst in economics and societal patterns, as he comments on our historical time:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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4 Bosch, p. 378.
Let us begin by examining the great theological conversation through the eyes of the historical paradigms of church history.

**Examining the “Great Theological (Western) Conversation”**

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

**Basic Observations:**

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

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

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

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

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

**Figure 1**

Preserving the Apostles’ Doctrine Through the Centuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>90’s</th>
<th>early 4th cent.</th>
<th>15th/16th cent.</th>
<th>17th century</th>
<th>mid 20th cent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Testament Church</td>
<td>The Early Church</td>
<td>The Catholic Church</td>
<td>The Reformed Church</td>
<td>The Enlightened Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Apostles’ Doctrine</td>
<td>Councils, Creeds &amp; Didaches</td>
<td>Papal Authority, Canon Law &amp; Sacramental System</td>
<td>Councils, Confessions &amp; Catechisms</td>
<td>Seminaries &amp; Enlightened Theologians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Posture Towards the First Principles:

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

Dominant Carriers of the Conversation:

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

**Kung’s Paradigms of Theology**

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

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

**Cultural Context of the Great Theological Conversation**

(See the Great Books of the Western World collection – 54 volumes edited by Mortimer Adler. The set is built around the first book entitled The Great Conversation and visualizes the conversation three ways – authors on a time line, authors building upon authors, and 102 great ideas, with over 3,000 subordinate ideas – well developed in a two volume Syntopican – enabling the conversation to be entered at any point.)
It seems timely, at this point in this treatise, to address several implications of our observations so far.

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

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

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

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

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

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6 *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, by Edward de Bono (Harper & Row, 1970)
impacting any culture at any time in history. That will be the focus of the last section of this paper.

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

**Revisiting the Apostolic Tradition**

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

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

The New Testament Church:

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

One point needs to be made briefly at this time. This teaching included more than just a few core doctrines for salvation. It included such teaching as how local churches ought to conduct their community life (1 Tim. 3:14-16; Titus 2) and how individual households - families - ought to conduct their family life (household texts such as Ephesians 5:22-6:9). For a more
comprehensive guide to revisiting the apostles’ tradition, see “Appendix I: Traditions, Patterns and Sound Doctrine in the Early Church”, taken from the first project guide in the BILD Leadership Series I course entitled “Essentials of Sound Doctrine”.

The Early Church:

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

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

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

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

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

**Guiding Principles:**

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

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

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

2. *The process of doing church-based theology in culture must be biblically based in its overall approach.* This is difficult to sort out as well, since today much of our hermeneutical methods and systems of doing theology are so far removed from the church that it actually, at times, gets in the way of the church doing good theology. Hermeneutics were distorted by the Catholic church in the medieval years, using allegory to validate interpretations not defensible from the literal Scriptures; and by the scientific approach of the enlightenment church, which reduced the beauty of a community of faith doing theology in dialogue, to an individualistic, almost scientific enterprise for professionals, if not in practice, at least in the minds of the
churches. Theology itself has been dominated by a pattern of systematizing which we call systematic theology. Western systematic theology has its roots in Western philosophy, which has its roots in the Greek academy. While at one time called dogmatics, out of a design to defend the faith of the churches, contemporary systematic theology poses a series of questions and a way of categorizing which is quite foreign to matters of the churches. It does fit quite comfortably in academia. The whole system needs to be rethought. Two evangelicals who have done tremendous work, calling for us to fundamentally rethink these systems are Walter Kaiser and Elliott Johnson⁹. Johnson, along with Kaiser are calling for a hermeneutical revolution in which we develop a focus on the author’s intended meaning as expressed in a biblical text. Kaiser has gone further than hermeneutics alone, and is calling for us to rethink our manner of theologizing as well, turning our attention to a relatively recent discipline - biblical theology. The biblical theology movement, attributed by many to Brevard Child⁹, himself a new paradigm thinker in the tradition of Karl Barth, focuses on allowing the biblical canon to speak for itself and a method of study in which the Scriptures are studied in the order in which they were written. This allows themes to surface and make their own emphases, with a categorization system of theology set in tune with these emphases. The problem today, is that our church traditions and theological institutions are dominated by systematic theology, which is often our starting point for doing theology. A careful, disciplined, biblical theology approach will oblitater our Western, systematic theology approach and categories. We have to radically adjust our method to a purely biblical-based approach if we ever expect churches to do fresh, relevant theology in culture.

3. The process of doing church-based theology must be done in the culture in which the churches are being established, and by those churches themselves. One of the most respected educational theorists worldwide, Paulo Freire¹¹, has demonstrated quite convincingly, that effective education of “the people” involves engaging them in a problem-posing process, from the base of their culture and current life situation. In this process they begin to interact with the larger world and its knowledge base, and through that interaction develop a “critical consciousness”, and are able to put that new knowledge to use in their lives and impact the culture in which they live. William Dyrness, in his book Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology: Case Studies in Vernacular Theologies, builds on the same idea, although he does not

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¹¹ His two most important books, and must reading for any educator, are Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Continuum, 1984) and Education for Critical Consciousness (Continuum, 1994). Other helpful works include Learning to Ask Questions: A Pedagogy of Liberation (Continuum, 1992), Pedagogy of the City (Continuum, 1993) and Pedagogy of Hope (Continuum, 1994). Also helpful is a book by a long time comrade Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work, by Mouctir (Suny, 1994).
work with Freire’s material. He examines the theology of five movements of churches, four in developing countries. He asks the question how can they develop theologically, building on their foundation, which he calls their “vernacular theology”? This theology is often much like that of the early New Testament churches. That is, how can they get into the theological conversation worldwide, grow in their understanding, and thus do theology in culture, without being corrupted by the Western churches? He concludes that they must learn to do theology themselves, in their culture, and develop what Freire calls a “critical consciousness”.

What might this process actually look like? Several significant models have been recently set forth by very substantive theologians who have a tremendous understanding of the paradigmatic issues being set forth in this paper. Their ideas are well worth reflecting upon. The first is Harvie Conn12, who advocates doing biblical theology in culture, carefully reasoning why it should be the foundation of the process. A second is Edward Farley13 who advocates returning to the wisdom tradition of the pre-enlightenment days. He calls for a three step process: 1) interpretation of tradition, where we examine the deep structure of the roots of our traditions to create awareness; 2) interpretation of truth, where we revisit the Scriptures (and other source documents); and 3) interpretation of action, where the church builds whole new categories of theology in culture. Building upon Farley, Don Browning14 adds an additional and final stage in the process, which he calls strategic practical theology. He calls on the church to build whole new ministry paradigms through this process. Browning also believes that this theologizing should take place in community, and illustrates the validity of this process by working his model out in the community life of four different churches.

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

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

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13 The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church & University, by Edward Farley (Fortress, 1988). Especially note chapter 7, “The Structure of Theological Study: Mapping the Terrain”.
14 A Fundamental Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals, by Don S. Browning (Fortress, 1991).
its first level “New Testament didache type” theology, we can expect some of the most innovative and stimulating theology to come from these young developing churches. The interchange process may ultimately be more needed by the Western churches than the developing churches. Those of us from the west must shed our colonial Western type thinking, and learn to hold our Western tradition with healthy suspicion. All of us regardless of our traditions or place in the world, must do what we can to foster a genuine fellowship of local churches worldwide, engaged in doing theology in culture.

A Working Model:

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

Phase 1: Build a Framework from Scripture

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

Phase 2: Systematically Address Cultural Issues and Questions

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

¹⁵ This process (sections to books to teaching passages to biblical theology) is patterned after Walter Kaiser’s two ground breaking works - Toward an Exegetical Theology (Baker, 1981) and Toward an Old Testament Theology (Zondervan, 1978).
study. It is tempting here, especially for developing churches, to turn to Western systematic theology, with its questions and categories, rather than beginning to do its own theology in culture. The reason that this should be avoided is not so much that systematics can’t transcend culture (although it almost never does because even good systematics needs to be rooted in culture), but that Western systematic theology has been dominated by the academy and the official church since the early church. It is on a different agenda, often asking fundamentally different questions from those who are doing theology in the life of the local church. Several recent works have surfaced which can help guide us in this process\textsuperscript{16}, but it is often by just the natural process, over a period of years of establishing churches and doing disciplined biblical theology, that the cultural categories begin to emerge.

Phase 3: Develop Practical Theology for Ministry

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Doing Theology in Culture}, BILD-International Leadership Series II course, currently in design phase.
NEW PARADIGMS FOR THE POST-MODERN CHURCH

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

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

Leadership Series I is designed to guide churches through revisiting the apostolic tradition - the didache, the first principles, in a careful and disciplined manner.

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

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

Conclusion:

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

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

Figure 2

Build a Framework from Scripture

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

Develop Practical Theology for Ministry

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

Systematically Address Cultural Issues and Categories

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

The Growth of Apostolic Doctrine:

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

Existence of this Body of Teaching:

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

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

In Paul’s Writings:

- Early writings: traditions, instructions, commandments

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

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

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

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

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

In the General Epistles:

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

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

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

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

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

3. Stabilizing the Community - In this stage, which seemed inevitable for every church to pass through, almost as if it was a necessary part of the maturing process, Paul had to reinforce his teaching by clarification and exhortation. This was partly because many followed him around, or followed after him, trying to get the churches out from under his influence. Again, Paul followed the same pattern in trying to get the churches to hold fast to the apostles' teaching: He challenged them to hold to his teaching: (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5:28; 2 Thessalonians)
   a. by sending letters which clarified his teaching and challenged them to hold firm
   b. by sending men from his team with the letters and authorizing them to deal with those who would not conform
   c. by visiting them himself if possible.
The Essentials of the Apostolic Doctrine

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

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

*Gospel and Law*, by C.H. Dodd

The Kerygma:

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

The Didache:

1. Each believer is instructed to lay aside his old life, renew His mind in the teaching, and conform his new life to the will of God. (Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 12:1,2)
2. A set of virtues, only possible through God's resources, are to characterize each believer. (Galatians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Peter 1:1-11)
3. Individual households must be ordered properly, consistent with God's created design for man and for the Church. (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Peter 3:1-7)
4. God's household, the church, the pillar and support of the truth, must be properly ordered according to sound doctrine received from the apostles, especially Paul. (1 Timothy 3:14-16; Titus 1:5-2:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; Ephesians 3:1-13; Colossians 1:24-29)
5. Each must be committed to do his part, both generally in one another ministry, and specifically in the use of his gifts in the building up of the church. (Romans 12:3-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6)
6. A pattern of relationships within the church must be observed, characterized by love, brotherhood, mutual acceptance and respect, in
which each is to diligently pursue unity in the bond of peace. (Romans 12:9-15; 14:1-7; Philippians 1:27-2:4; Ephesians 4:1-6)

7. A pattern of relationships in the world must be observed, characterized by respect for government, employees and other authorities, and love and good deeds toward neighbors and those in need. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 2:14; 3:1,14)

8. Each must lead a responsible and sober life, working hard, providing for his own, making the most of the time (because the days are evil) and keeping on the alert for Satan and his strategies. (Ephesians 5:1-22; 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Peter 5:6-11)
Appendix II: Toward a Belief Framework in Culture

Phase 1: Build a Belief Framework in Culture:

I. The Essentials of Sound Doctrine

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

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

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1. Each believer is instructed to lay aside his old life, renew His mind in the teaching, and conform his new life to the will of God. (Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 12:1,2)
2. A set of virtues, only possible through God's resources, are to characterize each believer. (Galatians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Peter 1:1-11)
3. Individual households must be ordered properly, consistent with God's created design for man and for the Church. (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Peter 3:1-7)
4. God's household, the church, the pillar and support of the truth, must be properly ordered according to sound doctrine received from the apostles, especially Paul. (1 Timothy 3:14-16; Titus 1:5-2:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; Ephesians 3:1-13; Colossians 1:24-29)

5. Each must be committed to do his part, both generally in one another ministry, and specifically in the use of his gifts in the building up of the church. (Romans 12:3-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

6. A pattern of relationships within the church must be observed, characterized by love, brotherhood, mutual acceptance and respect, in which each is to diligently pursue unity in the bond of peace. (Romans 12:9-15; 14:1-7; Philippians 1:27-2:4; Ephesians 4:1-6)

7. A pattern of relationships in the world must be observed, characterized by respect for government, employees and other authorities, and love and good deeds toward neighbors and those in need. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 2:14; 3:1,14)

8. Each must lead a responsible and sober life, working hard, providing for his own, making the most of the time (because the days are evil) and keeping on the alert for Satan and his strategies. (Ephesians 5:1-22; 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Peter 5:6-11)

II. Summary of Biblical Message Statement and Biblical World View
(Developed in the Covenants, Unity of Scripture and Biblical World View course.)

Central Message Statement:

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

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

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

by recording the history of the nation of Israel, through which God sovereignly continued to unfold His plan, revealing an additional aspect of His promise to bless all the families of the earth in the covenant with David, which looks forward to a coming seed of David who would rule forever, continuing to give insight into living by faith in the plan of God, again emphasizing and illustrating man's propensity to resist that plan and go his own way (Joshua through Esther)
by preserving the psalms of David and those who wrote in his
tradition, providing the people with a sort of "divine hymnbook" for
worship and reflection by the people of God, both individually and
corporately, that they might internalize the Word up through the
Davidic era, and continuing down to the post-exilic time, that they
might acquire a heart for God (Psalms)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Basic Statement of World View:

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

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

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

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

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

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

III. Biblical Theology Work

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

The Pentateuch

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

The narrative books are excellent for seeing the whole lives of believers, as well as being able to see the individual choices they made, and how they handled their problems. An excellent tool would be to develop a life-development time
line of all of the major (and eventually minor) biblical characters to use as prototypes for use in counseling. The lives of those we are seeking to help will parallel at least one biblical character.

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

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

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

Psalms
The psalms are excellent for dealing with all sorts of problems. This can best be visualized by understanding the different types of psalms. Here are just a few.
- psalms of individual laments and penitential psalms
  These are excellent for helping people through individual difficulties, the grief process, as well as working through failure, repenting, and recovering to a right relationship with God.
- psalms of trust and meditation
  These are excellent for gaining a healthy focus on life, for quieting anxiety, and building trust.
- salvation history psalms
  These are excellent for gaining perspective on life and history and a confidence in the control of God over all of life and its events.
- psalms of praise and thanksgiving
  These are excellent for keeping a positive focus in life, keeping one's heart in tune with God, and for use in song and memorization. All are key to sound emotional health. Also, the Psalms are intended to keep God's kingdom purposes and promises living in the heart of each believer.
The Gospels
- placing of Christ in the overall plan of God, clarifying the plan of God
- a complete example of living a godly life
- skill in sharing our faith
- dealing skillfully with people
- getting to underlying problems, to the real issue
- asking key questions
The gospels expose us to the master counselor. Here we can see counseling and shepherding in full action. This material would be excellent for developing a skills manual in how to deal with people, ask questions, get to the underlying problems, and direct the person towards his greatest need: the gospel.

Acts & The Pauline Epistles
- the mission and purpose of the church
- the church in the world - in a community, under a government, as a witness
- the basic teaching delivered to the churches; their way of working and functioning
- basic teaching for the marriage and family; how to order their lives as members of Christ's church
- use of time, talents and money
- solving the basic problems of new believers - early epistles
- helping believers get their life purpose in focus - prison epistles
- helping believers stay sound and healthy, with well-ordered lives and homes - pastoral epistles
The early epistles bring the gospel to bear on most all the problems these new believers brought with them into the churches, and focus on how to grow in the Word, and walk with the Spirit in their new lives. The middle set focuses on continuing that walk, bringing into much clearer focus their new life in Christ and the importance of devoting their lives to Him and His purposes. The final set of letters focus on sound living over the duration of their lives in community with other believers.

The General Epistles
- helping believers stay with the faith
- dealing with those who might potentially leave the faith
These letters are a helpful resource for those who are in danger of losing their faith, or possibly returning after having left or backslidden for a period of time. They are useful also for identifying warning signs in a person which might lead to an abandonment of the faith.

Johannine Literature:
- a significant contribution to apologetics, keys to bringing about belief
- a complete view of God's plan for history: the nations, the church, Israel
- a view intended to help the churches in any culture survive the persecutions and keep perspective in light of God's overall plan
Phase 2: Systematically Address Cultural Issues & Categories:

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

Basic Challenges to Christianity  (Defense of faith, apologetics):
- New age movement
- Exclusion of religion from schools, universities and public debate

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

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

Everyday Living in community:
- careerism and the life of the church
- ethics in business
- family - marriage’s role in today’s society, care of parents, training of children (public, private or home schooling)
- life in an information, technological society - busyness, mobility, debt
- daily routines - commuting, shopping, eating, sleeping, television, hospitality, eating, drinking, etc.
- use of time, talents, money
- work and leisure
- communicating and relating
- ministry - gifts, skills development, volunteer service
- care of elderly, widows, parents
- our witness in the community - time, skills, hospitality, availability, etc.
Phase 3: Develop Practical Theology for Ministry:

Evaluation of Current Ministries in Light of Scripture and Culture:

Example of the process:

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

Personal/Family Ministry Strategies:

These are personal/family ministries which appear to need to be rethought:
- development of profession and career
- training of our children
- serious ordered religious learning as in other areas - career as an example
- use of time, talents, resources for the ministry
- household outreach strategy

Church Ministry Strategies:

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

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

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

Leadership Series I

Essential Foundations
1. Acts: Keys to the Establishment and Expansion of the First-Century Church
2. The Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches
3. Understanding the Essentials of Sound Doctrine

Spiritual Formation
1. Character of a Leader
2. Habits of the Heart
3. Ministry Priorities & Personal Management
4. Ministry Perspectives: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Academic Studies
1. Interpreting the Word I: Principles and Procedures
2. Interpreting the Word II: Languages and Study Aides
3. Preaching and Teaching
4. Covenants, Unity of Scripture and Biblical Worldview

Ministry Philosophy and Skills
1. The Family and the Early Church
2. Evangelism and the Early Church
3. Shepherding, Counseling and the Early Church
4. Leaders and the Early Church

Leadership Series II

Toward a Theology in Culture
1. Doing Theology in Culture

Toward a Theology in Culture - I
Old Testament Theology
1. The Law
2. The Former Prophets
3. The Latter Prophets
4. The Writings

Toward a Theology in Culture - II
New Testament Theology
1. The Gospels
2. Acts and Pauline Epistles
3. The General Epistles
4. Johannine Literature

Building a Theology in Culture
1. Constructing a Comprehensive Belief Framework in Culture

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We live in a time when the whole nature of life, culture, and even the very essence of work is changing. Our world is changing from nation states to regional economics. The global explosion of information is creating a whole new type of work, giving birth to what Peter Drucker calls the “knowledge worker.” The knowledge worker is going to need to learn a new set of skills. Knowledge is fast becoming the new capital. Yet information and knowledge are not enough, we must learn how to apply this new knowledge. Drucker continues to reason that these enormous shifts will eventually lead to a whole new understanding of an educated person:

This must change the very meaning of “educated person.” It must change the very meaning of what it means to be educated. It will thus predictably make the definition of the “educated person” a crucial issue. With knowledge becoming the key resource, the educated person faces new demands, new challenges, new responsibilities. The educated person now matters.\(^1\)

Drucker goes on to argue, very convincingly, that the educated person cannot be reduced to a traditional classical understanding, but must take into account the enormous demands of the new information age. He cannot be a generalist in the sense of knowing all disciplines, because there is too much to know. (Our current knowledge base has about a four-year half-life, which means that every four years, half of our knowledge will be obsolete.) In order to succeed in this new society we must have the ability to gain knowledge, and process it accurately.

This provides a tremendous opportunity for the evangelical church if we reflect carefully on its implications. If anyone has the opportunity to become truly educated people, effective in life and work in the coming global village, it ought to be believers. Yet we live in a time in the church when theology has been professionalized and divorced from church life. One of the areas where this is at epidemic proportions is in the area of hermeneutics. Most believers cannot accurately interpret even the most basic texts of Scripture. They have become products of a relativistic, experience-oriented society, which no longer has the critical ability to interpret the constitution or good literature according to its original intent. Edward Farley hit the nail right on the head in his assessment of the average church member in his article “Can Church Education Be Theological Education?”

\[^1\text{Post Capitalist Society, by Peter F. Drucker (Harper Collins), p. 211.}\]
Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian learning through historical-critical studies of the Bible, to the content and structures of the great doctrines, to two thousand years of classic works on the Christian life, to the basic disciplines of theology, biblical languages and Christian ethics? Why do bankers, lawyers, farmers, physicians, homemakers, scientists, salespeople, managers of all sorts, people who carry out all kinds of complicated tasks in their work and home, remain at a literalist, elementary school level in their religious understanding? How is it that high school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture? How is it possible one can attend or even teach in a Sunday school for decades and at the end of that time lack the interpretive skills of someone who has taken three or four weeks in an introductory course in Bible at a university or seminary?²

This is a very accurate description of our churches. The solution needed is far deeper than just teaching a basic hermeneutics course in church. Our whole orientation as a Western church must change. We must fundamentally change our approach to the discipline of hermeneutics, bringing it back into the life of the church. We must move away from it being merely an individualistic, professional enterprise for ministers, and develop broad-based interpretation skills within our churches. And finally, we must develop a desire within our churches for every believer to become a thinking Christian. It will be impossible to take full advantage of the opportunity presented to the evangelical church as we move into the information society without equipping all believers in our churches to think critically and biblically through the mass amount of information which comes through their lives and work. This illiteracy problem must become a priority amongst churches.

PARADIGM SHIFTS IN WESTERN HERMENEUTICAL THOUGHT

I am not going to attempt to survey the history of interpretation down through church history in this paper. Instead, I am going to attempt to envision for you the major paradigm shifts³ which are taking place in hermeneutics as we move from the modern to the postmodern era, and then apply it to the need in the church today. Actually, there are two major

² From “Can Church Education Be Theological Education” in The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University, by Edward Farley (Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 92,93.
³ I am not going to review the concept of paradigm or defend it as a credible, scholarly way of understanding the times. See my previous paradigm papers for several examples. For two exhaustive seminal works on the paradigms of church history from a theological and missions vantagepoint see Christianity: Essence, History and Future, by Hans Kung (Continuum, 1994), and Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission, by David Bosch (Orbis, 1991).
shifts that are taking place and appear to be reshaping the entire hermeneutical process. One is philosophically driven, and the other is technologically driven. Our examination of both of these shifts coupled with our understanding of the church-based model—which has unfolded through our paradigm papers⁴—will go a long way towards solving the problem of churches being full of non-thinking believers.

**Philosophically Driven Paradigm Shift (Paradigms of Thinking).**

The paradigm shift in hermeneutics from a philosophical standpoint is much larger than biblical interpretation. The most influential figure by far in this shift is Hans-Georg Gadamer. The contributions of his work are rippling far beyond biblical studies, reshaping such giants as law, education, philosophy, and linguistics, to mention a few. Gadamer’s most important work is *Truth and Method*. His fundamental idea is that in the modern era, the Enlightenment, we thought we could come to truth through scientific method alone. He philosophically proves that in reality we can get much closer to the approximation or full discovery of truth through a reflective process involving dialogue amongst several people. In *Truth and Method* he writes the following conclusion:

Thus there is undoubtedly no understanding that is free from all prejudices, however much the will of our knowledge must be directed toward escaping their thrall. Throughout our investigation it has emerged that the certainty achieved by using scientific methods does not suffice to guarantee truth. This especially applies to the human sciences, but it does not mean that they are less scientific; on the contrary, it justifies the claim to special humane significance that they have always made. The fact that in such knowledge the knower’s own being comes into play certainly shows the limits of method, but not of science. Rather, what the tool of method does not achieve—must—and really can—be achieved by a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth.⁵

Most consider Gadamer as the father of the postmodern paradigm of hermeneutics. His thinking symbolizes the emerging of an entirely new way of thinking from what has dominated us for the last several hundred years. The following chart, figure 1, “Paradigms of Thinking,” attempts to

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⁴ This is the final paper in a series that has been written and delivered over approximately five years. Four were delivered at BILD-International conferences, one at the North American Professors of Christian Education (NAPCE) annual conference, and one at the 1995 Christian Leadership Summit. They are now collected into a series entitled New Paradigms for the Postmodern Church. The previous five papers are:
- Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm
- Church-Based Missions: Creating a New Paradigm
- Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm
- Church-Based Christian Education—Part I: Childhood and Adolescence
- Church-Based Christian Education—Part II: Adulthood

These papers may be ordered from BILD-International (515) 292-7012 or LearnCorp Leadership Center (515) 292-6810.

⁵ *Truth and Method*, by Hans-George Gadamer (Crossroad, 1975, 1989)
summarize the shift that is taking place. The two ovals represent the waning and emerging paradigms. The waning Enlightenment paradigm centers around “calculative thinking”—thinking which is method-based. The emerging paradigm in philosophical circles is called Gelassenheit (releasement) thinking. This probably best parallels our common idea of meditative thinking.

The goal of the Enlightenment model of hermeneutics was to train teachers and scholars in methods and techniques to enable them to objectively, almost scientifically, arrive at the truth in a text. In the emerging postmodern model, the goal changes to be the creation in an individual of what Gadamer calls a “hermeneutically trained judgment.” In other words, the goal is not the best method of study, but the ability to think clearly and soundly. This is what has been referred to down through the centuries as practical reason or practical wisdom. All through the history of Western thought, from Socrates and Plato on, the goal was to develop practical reason. Except for during the Enlightenment, the goal has not been method but the ability to reason clearly and critically. Gadamer speaks favorably of tradition predating the Enlightenment. Anthony Thiselton, in his monumental work New Horizons in Hermeneutics, summarizes Gadamer’s thought:

Gadamer does not accept the later Heidegger’s negative evaluation of tradition since Plato. Rather, he traces a positive continuity of emphasis on “practical reason” from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, through Roman legal thought, to Vico, Shaftesbury, Thomas Reid, Hegel, and Bergson. English empiricism and Enlightenment rationalism represent an artificial narrowing of this tradition in which positivistic, theoretical, and individual-centered wisdom becomes abstracted from tradition and community. 6

Gadamer refers positively to Plato’s “the scholar and the wise man,” and Aristotle’s practical wisdom (phronesis). So those entering the postmodern era, an era “enlightened” as to the limitations of scientific method, have two courses available to them. One is the path where there can be no determinate criteria for discovering truth—science is fallible so there is no path to truth—the typical postmodern answer. The second path is having a mature approach to the pursuit of truth, which down through the centuries has been referred to as practical wisdom. The latter is the correct approach for the evangelical.

This reality—though at first rather abstract to most Christians—is very practical. Note one phrase from the Thiselton quote above, “individual-centered wisdom becomes abstracted from tradition and community.” This

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**Paradigms of Thinking**

Heidegger \(\rightarrow\) Gadamer

**Waning Enlightenment Paradigm**

“Calculative”
(Method-Based)
Thinking

Examples:
- higher critical methodology
- methodical Bible study – Traina
- Greek and Hebrew exegetical methodology
- exegetical commentaries

**Emerging Post Modern Paradigm**

“Meditative”
or “Releasement”
(Gelassenheit)
Thinking

Examples:
- Gadamer’s “hermeneutically trained” judgment
- Johnson’s hermeneutical spiral adaptation
- Browning’s strategic practical theology in community
- Childs’ canonical process
- Cobb’s practical Christian thinker, reflective

**Goal:** The goal is to train teachers and scholars in methods and techniques to enable them to objectively, almost scientifically to arrive at the truth in the text.

English empiricism and Enlightenment rationalism represent an artificial narrowing of this tradition (practical wisdom) in which positivistic theoretical, and individual-centered reason becomes abstracted from tradition and community. (Thiselton, p.320)

**Goal:** The goal is the creation of what Gadamer calls “hermeneutically trained” judgment, which is consistent with a concept in all ages except the Enlightenment: practical reason, or practical wisdom.

Continuity line through the ages: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, through Roman legal thought, to Vico, Shaftesbury, Thomas Reid, Hegel, and Bergson. (Thiselton, p. 320)
is practically what has happened in the lives of our churches. Hermeneutics is no longer a “practical reason skill” carried out in the context of dialogue and community. Instead our biblical studies have become academic, individualized, critical, and very technical. Greek and Hebrew exegetical methodology is practically out of reach to all, and our commentaries which contain in-depth research are all written in a way which particularizes the text and records the research in a way which is almost completely irrelevant to the life and ministry of the church. Though these are difficult ideas to comprehend, in the end they are very practical to the life of the church.

This is probably a good spot to comment on the work of Paulo Freire. Freire’s concept of critical consciousness is a lot like Gadamer’s idea of hermeneutically trained judgment. Freire develops his concepts in the context of education—especially literacy programs at a national level. Freire argues that effective education of the masses involves engaging them in a problem-posing process drawn from their own life situations. In this process they begin to operate with the larger world around them and its knowledge base, and through that interaction develop “critical consciousness,” enabling them to put that knowledge to work in their own lives. Once the critical consciousness is there, they are able to think clearly and develop soundly. According to Freire, these skills are not limited to the privileged who have access to the formal educational systems of the Western countries.

One additional point is important at this stage. In my Church-Based Theology paper I addressed the problem of theology being married with the Western academy from the middle of the second century until today. We saw that a theological tradition actually predated the Western academy model. This Greek model—the Antioch tradition—was driven by a pastoral agenda of establishing and shepherding churches. Building on that argument, a case can be made that more change is needed than just a return to the pre-Enlightenment tradition of practical reason from academic hermeneutics. It is not enough to go back to practical wisdom with a token nod to community. Our interpretive model must become rooted in the life of local churches, and we must develop churches filled with Christians who can practice practical reason—sound critical thinking—in community together. Those gifted as what we might refer to as theologians must not view their gifts as a call to a life of “individual exegetical” work, but to helping churches grow, become established, and multiply.

Lets briefly review some of the key concepts of this emerging paradigm, which picks up on the more important elements of the practical wisdom tradition. Probably one of the best phrases that pictures the direction we need to go as evangelicals is reflected in Gadamer’s idea of a hermeneutically trained judgment. This means that our focus should not be so much on method, but on thinking skills and processes. It is more important to help each believer develop the ability to think than it is to follow a specific method of study. Another key idea is the “genre logi
process,” first developed by E.D. Hirsch in *Validity in Interpretation* and built upon by Elliott Johnson in *Expository Hermeneutics.* Johnson places the emphasis on a “spiral process.” It is very close to a description of the actual mechanism that is in operation when we use our critically-trained judgment. I will develop this idea in the last part of this paper. Another key concept is Don Browning’s “strategic practical theology.” It is another way of saying that churches need to develop the ability to think, strategize, and develop ministries based on a community-wide, critically-trained judgment—a practical reason. Brevard Childs also calls us to a sort of theology in community dialogue with his “canonical process.” Even though he believes that Scripture itself progresses under the interpretation of the contemporary believing community—his call to interpret the text accurately as first received by the believing community to which it was written, and then interpret it in contemporary community life, is very much in the new emerging paradigm tradition. His research also “sews back together” the books which were dissected by the higher critics at the height of the scientific hermeneutic days. And finally John B. Cobb, Jr.’s concept of the “thinking Christian” is very useful in trumpeting the call for all Christians to develop a critically-trained judgment.

**Technologically Driven Paradigm Shift (Electronic Publishing)**

There is another force driving the emergence of a new paradigm in hermeneutics—technology. More specifically, the force is electronic publishing. Electronic publishing, linked with the fast developing field of linguistics, is driving the new paradigm quickly up the paradigm curve. Wycliffe—widely know to be one of the pioneers in the field of linguistics—has long felt that we teach language incorrectly in our traditional seminary Hebrew and Greek programs. It is clear that our seminar language and exegetical approach has been dominated by the method-based paradigm—learn the exegetical methods; memorize the language paradigms (different use of paradigm!). I will never forget the casual conversation I had several years ago with a top Wycliffe linguist, which turned out to be surprising. We were discussing the differences between the traditional seminary language approach and that of a linguist. I happened to agree with her ideas, so that is not what surprised me. The surprise came in the intensity of her convictions—convictions which I have

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10 Browning develops the whole concept of strategic practical theology in his book *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*, by Don Browning (Fortress, 1991). The whole book is on the process, with four churches serving as models. His main ideas are explained in the introduction—“From Practice to Theory and back Again.”
11 Childs has several works out—Old and New Testament introductions, a biblical theology work and several others all working with his canonical process method. Probably the most useful introduction to his work is *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Fortress, 1979). Chapter 3 “Canon and Criticism” explains the method.
12 John B. Cobb, Jr. has written innovatively and radically on theological education and is a very creative thinker, though again not evangelical. His concept of every believer becoming a practical Christian thinker is developed practically in *Becoming a Thinking Christian* (Abingdon, 1993).
grown to appreciate only recently. She believed that in the long run, our current seminary approach is detrimental to the lives of our churches.

The basic difference is this—the scientific method-based approach relies on the calculating skill, and the methodical detailed research of the individual interpreter; while the more natural linguistic approach relies on the grasp of the basic principles of language and the clarity which comes from understanding the dynamics of language and communication. The sharpening of our instinctive understanding of language rather than the allusion of mastering dead languages is more the hermeneutical goal. This, of course, is accessible to more people, and places a different "principle of selection" around the choice of word meanings. In other words, anyone who understands language well, has access to the meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words, and a basic understanding of the key linguistic characteristics of Greek and Hebrew, can do as good of a job "exegetically" (and sometimes better) as a seminary student with two or three years of Greek and Hebrew. This is greatly accentuated by the emergence of electronic publishing. With the aid of a tool like Logos Library System (based on the old Dallas Seminary CD Word), you can now do the biblical language research in two hours that used to take two days. We can now carry $2,000 worth of language tools around in our pockets and almost instantly search dozens of language resources. The rules are changing. So is the paradigm.

It seems timely at this point in the paper, to address several implications of our observations thus far:

1. We need to stop viewing the study of hermeneutics as primarily an academic, scientific exercise for theologians and ministers. Hermeneutics is not primarily an individual enterprise to be carried out in a scientific manner by theologians and professional pastors, but a skill needed by all believers. The professionalization of this training process has removed the skills from an average believer, and often actually removed the message from the understanding of those listening to the Sunday exposition of the Word. Basically today we have an educated clergy and an uneducated laity, and in essence, neither are truly educated. Our hermeneutical approach lies at the foundation.

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14 Logos Library System is leading the way in systems which allow you to work with the original Greek and Hebrew, not just the numbering systems. The following papers will allow you to get a clear understanding of the directions and tremendous future contributions of electronic publishing to biblical hermeneutics. *Original Languages*, by Scoie Smith (A Logos Research System Workshop). "Mission Research and the Path to the CD-ROM: Report on the Global Quest to Share Information," from *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (October, 1995).
2. **We need to seek to develop a critically trained judgment in every believer.** People are in Bible studies and small groups every week. They are in the Word daily in many churches, yet most do not know how to interpret accurately. They go after whatever stands out to them, because they do not have “practical reason skill.” They cannot read a text and quickly and naturally come up with its true meaning. We must develop this in our people if we expect them to be effective “knowledge workers,” leaders in their lives and work.

3. **We need to replace our rigid exegetical methods with a much more natural, reflective process.** We need to make Bible study more natural yet far more substantive. This is no easy task. Skills must be taught, and yet related to the everyday way we read, learn, and communicate. Most of us need to develop far greater skills in understanding our language—learning to accurately interpret what we read and what others say. These are skills. We need fresh methods of study which are process-oriented. We need resources which teach us to think. Our fill-in-the-blank resources only encourage others to think for us, and in reality warp our own ability to think.

4. **We need to engage the entire local church community in the interpretive process. That is, to teach our churches to become hermeneutical communities.** Our churches ought to be places where we all learn to think through life’s issues thoroughly and biblically as a community. We cannot be one-minded as a church if only a few can think biblically and critically. This still leaves room for some to take the lead on issues; in fact, it also opens the door for churches to take on resident theologians. This concept seems like a waste to churches today, because we do not see theology as relevant. We must reeducate ourselves to think of the church as a serious community of faith capable of addressing and solving major issues in our lives, communities, and ministries.

5. **We need to renovate our seminary language departments, teaching language in a way that can be passed on.** We need to be teaching our future leaders the nature of language and clear communication in a way that they can pass it on to every believer. Language is instinctive to man. It should be taught in a more natural manner. Linguists ought to become part of our language department. Our seminaries ought to become more like resource centers to churches to assist believers in learning how to develop “practical reason skills.” The linguistics of the biblical languages ought to gradually become part of the “practical reason skill” of many believers in our churches.

6. **We need to develop commentaries and other forms of biblical research in forms that are more relevant to the life of the Church.** It is totally amazing to me that almost all of our commentaries follow the same dry format, and yet we keep producing more of them. The commentary paradigm should stand as a monument to us of the disassociation of theology from the life and ministry of churches. We need fresh forms of biblical research which are usable to churches, and to the lives of believers. We will know when we have hit the mark when we develop
a style of commentary which deals in-depth with biblical texts, and yet the average believer finds it attractive, relevant, and desires to read it and use it in his life and ministry.  

**REVISITING THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION**

We will not go into the validation of the principles of hermeneutics from the early church in this section, instead we are going to go back and look at what the churches and their leaders were held responsible for as they interpreted and used the Scriptures.

**THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

The New Testament actually has a lot to say about interpreting the Word when approached from the vantagepoint of this paper. Both leaders and the churches were responsible to be able to think clearly through the Scriptures and to interpret them accurately.

*The Churches.* The church members were all to have critically trained judgments. You can see this very directly in Hebrews 5:11-14:

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes of milk only is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (NSAB)

Several concepts are important here. First note the mark of maturity—“through practice have their senses trained.” The first key concept is “practice.” It is a discipline, literally a habit which has resulted from practice and is now part of your essence. The next concept is “senses” which literally means “our sense of perception.” The last key word, “trained,” is the Greek word gymnadzo, which is where we get gymnastics or gymnasium. He is speaking here of an ability to accurately perceive the truth, naturally as part of your being, as a result of mastering and practicing the first principles. It is a skill of learning to think critically and see life through the first principles. That is the issue of the passage. The “good and evil” is good and evil teaching. If the elementary principles (literally “the first principles” in the Greek) are not mastered, then the rest of the oracles of God will easily be distorted. *This is exactly Gadamer’s concept of a hermeneutically trained judgment!*

Paul works with similar ideas in Colossians 2:6-8, where he refers to the elementary principles (same word—first principles) of the world and the elementary principles of Christ. One set of principles will drive us. Those who are established (the word means rooted, grounded in them) in the

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15 An example of the type of tools we are purporting is the 4th Generation Life Cycle System, a LearnCorp Leadership Center resource, which is based on over 2,000 house of research and contains commentary level research, but is designed for every believer.
ability to think through life’s choices based on the first principles of the faith are considered mature thinkers. The book of Hebrews carries with it some difficult concepts, but those with a critically trained judgment will be able to understand them. Peter tackles the same issue in 2 Peter 3:14-18 where he states that many of Paul’s teachings are difficult and the unestablished will distort them, and will fall victim to “unprincipled men.”

How do we know if believers have a “hermeneutically trained judgment”? It can be measured by an ability to accurately grasp the truths of Scripture and think through the implications for one’s life and work. I see the lack of this all the time in small study groups. When a person is asked to explain the meaning of a passage, verse, or concept, often the answer comes back with no real relationship to the meaning of the text. It is almost as if the person is saying the first thing that comes to his mind with no sense of what the text is saying. That person probably lacks a hermeneutically trained judgment, or in Hebrews terms, is not mature. This would not be so bad in our churches if it just happened occasionally, but the sense that I have is that it is an exception to find a believer with this practical reasoning skill. The biblical mandate infers that every believer can and should develop a hermeneutically trained judgment.

The Leaders. They are responsible to have hermeneutically trained judgments. You can see this clearly near the end of Paul’s ministry as he sort of released Timothy from his oversight. Paul challenged Timothy to discipline (the word gymnadzo again) himself for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-16). A big part of that discipline was devoting himself to be absorbed in carefully teaching the Scriptures. Later in 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul also exhorted Timothy:

Be diligent to present yourself to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. (NASB)

Earlier in 1 Timothy 6:2c he exhorted him to “teach and preach these principles.” Paul referred to the teaching he had entrusted to Timothy as “a deposit.” Timothy faithfully accepted that deposit and built his life and ministry solidly on the principles of that teaching and in association with Paul. Now he was to carry out the difficult, lifelong task of living his life, establishing churches, and dealing with all sorts of complicated “doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1) which would come at the churches. Timothy, and all leaders after him (2 Timothy 2:2), needed a hermeneutically trained judgment. It is important to note here that the early teaching, or building of this judgment, came from a mature leader faithfully entrusting the teaching, and then the ability grew in order to handle doctrines of demons. The hermeneutical process was passed on in the context of a local church agenda. Today this is often not the case. Advanced hermeneutical questions—in the context of academic freedom—often lead young aspiring leaders not to the sound ability to think critically, but into a wrangle of words and ideas, and straight into the doctrines of demons. Look at Princeton today.

The Early Church. The early church—the church during the first three centuries after the Apostles—began in this Pauline, or what is now called
the Antioch tradition. The concerns of the churches drove the entire process. In Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology, Justo Gonzalez called this tradition the pastoral tradition (an idea which is developed more extensively in the Church-Based Theology paper). This tradition was gradually abandoned as the 2nd century apologists turned to the questions of the Greek academy, and eventually the marriage of theology and the Western academy began to dominate. At least the Western academy concept of practical reason prevailed until the Enlightenment, when that too was replaced by the scientific method-based approach to truth. In this paper we are calling for a return all the way back to the Pauline/Antioch tradition, and then forward to the postmodern 21st century.

TOWARD A NEW PARADIGM: DEVELOPING A “HERMENEUTICALLY TRAINED JUDGMENT” IN COMMUNITY

Having identified our radically shifting cultural milieu, the reality of churches who are full of hermeneutically untrained believers, and having looked afresh at the New Testament and the Early Church, the objective of this paper is to bring us to a point of beginning to build a model that will effectively work in the 21st century world that we are entering. Therefore this section is entitled, “Toward a New Paradigm: Developing a ‘Hermeneutically Trained Judgment’ in Community.” Toward in the sense that we are just beginning to move up the paradigm curve, and are following the wave biblically, not actually creating a paradigm. I used the term “hermeneutically trained judgment” because I like it—it carries a certain historical weight, and reminds us of the pre-Enlightenment wise man/scholar (Socrates), senses trained (Hebrews 5:11-14), practical reason (Aristotle), habitus (Farley), and present day Gadamer tradition. (Though this is not to infer the Hebrews concept is man-made.) And finally, I used the word community to remind us that the entire process is to take place in community, the community being a local church and leaders of a church multiplication movement.

So how to we go about the process of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment in community? How do we change the attitudes of—at times—entire churches? How do we even begin to accomplish such a monumental task? First we need to isolate our guiding principles. Then we must build a general model.

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16 Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology, by Justo Gonzalez (Abingdon, 1989).
17 For those of you who have followed Farley’s argument as its has unfolded through these paradigm papers and the BILD leadership series seminar training, Farley, in his habitus concept, is really tapping into the pre-Enlightenment Western academy tradition of Plato’s wise man and Aristotle’s practical reason.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. *The process of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment must be church-based at its very heart and soul.* We have already established this point from several directions. The kind of judgment we are trying to create is not primarily academic, although it does involve academic elements. It is for churches and the believers in those churches. The driving force must be the establishing of churches in the first principles of the faith and then helping the believers to develop sound judgment—an intrinsic natural ability to interpret the Scriptures and their implications for their lives and work. How we think about the whole process must be church-based.

2. *The process of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment must grow out of believers being well established in the first principles of the faith.* This point has been established previously as well. Yet it is easy to miss its implications. We live in a pluralistic society where truth is relative. One of our highest values is academic freedom—each individual is free to make up his own mind. This concept permeates our theological academies to varying degrees, but it is always there to some degree. This is a very easy idea to misunderstand so listen carefully. It is a given that if each person needs a hermeneutically trained judgment, he or she must need to do some very important thinking for himself, particularly in regards to his own personal life and work. But the ability to think “Christianly” and critically does not mean we have the right to form our own set of first principles. This point is very important. We are to be taught the first principles. We are to faithfully integrate them into our lives. Only when we have mastered them are we in a position to go on to deeper things and begin developing a mature judgment as described in Hebrews. If we’re not careful, in the name of academic freedom, we may not learn the first principles, or may neglect some of them. This can get us off course for our entire lives. In addition, our ability to think biblically and critically assumes a foundation of the first principles. Some how they converge, through experience and the work of the Spirit, to develop within us this mature judgment—or what we are calling a hermeneutically trained judgment. We can only experience true “academic freedom” when we are properly grounded in the first principles of the faith. This is logical in every realm if you really think about it. We may want creative freedom in mathematics, but if we fail to become established in the first principles of math, we will be thinking freely, but also ridiculously as well. In fact, John Newman, is his classic *The Idea of the University* (which has two fresh editions released in just the last few years), argues that every discipline has a set of first principles and that a university is an environment where students are always “pushing up the first principles” and ultimately integrating their findings into their lives and work.18

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18 Newman’s original work was written in 1852. The two new additions recently released are *The Idea of the University* (Notre Dame, 1982) and *The Idea of the University* (Yale, 1996). Also note Pelikan’s work *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination*, by Jaroslav Pelikan (Yale, 1992).
3. The process of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment must be linguistically sound. It is also very important to realize that though we cannot get to this mature judgment without being established in the first principles, this is not some spiritual place that is inconsistent with the way God made us. A very impressive study has been done by Jean Grodin in his book *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics.* He makes a clear point, that what distinguishes us from animals is an inner logic (reason), which he calls the universality of hermeneutics. This is intrinsic to all men. E. D. Hirsch, in his now classic *Validity in Interpretation,* attempts to describe the process of communication with others and develops the concept of genre-logic. The process, natural to all men, goes like this: We all have a reasoning process which goes on inside of us, and eventually leads to a desire to communicate. That communication is formed into an idea. We then choose the particulars of language to communicate the idea. Another person encounters the particulars first, then recognizes your idea, and determines what you mean to say, and communication takes place. If your particulars are not clear, then the other person may think you are talking about something else. Eventually, though, it becomes clear, and he will say something like “Oh, I thought you were talking about . . . .” and communication takes place. This process is universal to all mankind.

Linguists have taken the process a bit further. They have convincingly proven that there is a core set of universal characteristics common to every language. This is very important in how we understand cross-cultural missions and cross-cultural communications. Far too much has been made of a premise that people from different cultures think differently. It is true that we may see the world differently. We may have different values. Our language may be different. We may not even understand each other’s illustrations. But fundamentally, deep down, we do not think differently. We all have the same intrinsic ability to reason, we all go through the same communication and interpretive processes, and we all share some of the most basic conventions of language in common. That is the way God made us. So whatever process of interpretation we create, it must be consistent with the way God has made us. Another implication seems to be: if we can design methods that are consistent with the way we have been made, anyone should be able to be trained to use them.

4. The process of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment must be viewed as more a process than a method. This is not to say that it is without method, but once a sound process is established, many different methods can be followed. The process needs to take into consideration at least two important elements: (1) the individual’s reasoning process — coming to the point of understanding both the meaning of the biblical text and its implications for one’s life and work; (2) the community dialogue element. Dialogue is key. It is often referred to as Socratic dialogue or questioning (see Gadamer quote on page 3).

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19 *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics,* by Jean Grodin (Yale University, 1994).
We have structured the BILD-International courses around these core processes. Each individual must go through a reflective reasoning which leads him through the natural process of understanding the meaning of the Scriptures, thinking through the life implications, and developing convictions. Each individual must also go through a sort of Socratic dialogue in community, to test, refine and sharpen himself—all part of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment.

A final element of the process related to developing this “reason skill” is gaining some sense of the whole of the knowledge that is being pursued. This is what is often referred to as the “encyclopedic issue.” Our judgment will become sharper, both in regards to what we know, and what we do not know, if we have answered the basic encyclopedic questions: “What is the total picture of the body of knowledge we need to learn?” “In what order ought we to study the body of knowledge?” From a biblical vantagepoint, we have addressed the encyclopedic issue in depth in the Church-Based Theology paper and in the new BILD course Toward a Theology in Culture: A New Encyclopedia. One of the main reasons Christians do not develop a hermeneutically trained judgment is that they actually do not know very much about the Bible.

A Working Model:

We now want to set forth a working model for developing a hermeneutically trained judgment in churches and amongst leaders of church multiplication movements. This model will just be briefly visualized here, but has been in the process of development for over twenty years. My thinking started down this course about twenty years ago under the mentoring of Walter Kaiser and Elliott Johnson, who were both involved in writing and debating in the area of hermeneutics. I remember hearing both of them discuss and debate at the “International Council of Biblical Inerrancy Summit” in the 70’s. They reshaped my thinking around some very important concepts—author’s intended meaning, single meaning of a text, the hermeneutical spiral, and biblical theology as foundational to theology in culture. All are pieces of building a sound, reason-based interpretive process. Then I began to travel extensively in cultures quite foreign from my own, and the whole issue of linguistics began to surface. Finally, thinking through the implications of the church-based nature of hermeneutics amidst our church-based debates in the BILD network, the realization of how essential it is for the whole process to be ecclesiologically driven began to blossom. The following model is in one sense very basic, almost too basic. Yet upon careful reflection, I believe it contains all of the key issues that are necessary to build a community of faith that possesses a mature trained judgment. The model is visualized in figure 2, “Developing a Hermeneutically Trained Judgment in Community.”

Phase 1: Training in the First Principles

We must begin with teaching the first principles of the faith. In our culture it seems logical to begin with principles of interpretation, so that each person can discover the first principles for himself. At one level this is true.
We want to be developing their thinking processes right from the beginning, but the burden of training must rest on teachers training them in the first principles. These principles then will converge, giving them the base to think with sound judgment. Everyone needs to be established in the first principles. It is also important to note at this point the emphasis that Paul placed on establishing churches in the didache—the apostles’ teaching, which he also referred to as the deposit. The men he trained needed to be faithful with that deposit. Paul was driven to establish churches in the core truths so that they could go on to maturity. His men needed to master the first principles and preach them in season and out.

In our churches we must have a plan for establishing believers in the first principles of Christ. In the early church they developed didaches to train new believers and required all to learn them very early in the faith. We often lack such disciplined approaches in our churches today. BILD-International and LearnCorp Resources have developed The Establishing Series, a process-oriented resource designed to establish believers in the first principles of the faith and in developing the elementary skills of a hermeneutically trained judgment. The Leadership 2005 program is a more comprehensive plan, which sets the stage for the next phase, and in fact it leads one into it.

**Phase 2: Refining an Emerging Hermeneutically Trained Judgment**

Once the first principles are laid as a foundation, and evidenced as shaping the life and work of a believer, it is time to directly work on sharpening his “judgment” skills. This is the time to train in the skills themselves. Several skills should be taught at this time:

- Sound language principles (linguistics)
- The framework of Scripture and a vision for how to approach the Bible as a whole
- A process of study—Scripture, reading, Socratic discussions, projects (process built into the BILD Leadership Series\(^{20}\) curriculum and the Establishing Series)
- How to develop a long-term plan to master the Scriptures and incorporate them in your life and work
- A sound study method which itself is process-oriented

The Leadership 2005 and 2025 plans\(^{21}\) are designed to guide believers through this process and position them to enter phase three long term. Book four of the Establishing Series, together with workshops on aspects of developing a hermeneutically trained judgment, should go a long way in preparing them for “the meat of the Word.”

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\(^{20}\) Brochures on the Leadership Series I and II are available from BILD-International upon request. Call (515) 292-7012.

\(^{21}\) Brochures on Leadership 2005 (for adults) and Leadership 2025 (for high school students) are available from LearnCorp Leadership Center by request. Call (515) 292-6810.
Developing a Hermeneutically Trained Judgment in Community

Phase 1: Training in the First Principles
- train every believer in the first principles
- train aspiring leaders in the first principles, and have them minister amongst churches demonstrating their faithfulness to those principles

Phase 2: Refine an Emerging Hermeneutically Trained Judgment
- train in the elements of reason, discernment, language (how to think)
- train in a process – study, reading, Socratic discussion, projects, etc.
- build an encyclopedic understanding
- teach a solid method with new paradigm elements
- build a long term plan – biblical theology, theology

Phase 3: Fully Entering the Community Process

Hermeneutical Community in Action

Leadership Ordered Learning

Adult Ordered Learning
Just a few thoughts about method. Methods can vary, but a good method, in
the context of the discussion of this paper is very useful. It is also important
to stay with an ordered learning plan. We use a hermeneutical method
throughout the entire BILD-International and LearnCorp Leadership Center
curricula and resources. The method incorporates most of the key concepts
of this paper, and it is maximized in the context of community, as argued
throughout this paper. Yes, it is a method, but it emphasizes the process of
thinking. Principles and procedures for interpreting a text—our
method—are listed in Appendixes I and II.

• Appendix I: Principles for Understanding and Interpreting the
  Meaning of a Biblical Text
• Appendix II: Procedures for Understanding and Interpreting the
  Meaning of a Biblical Text

It may be helpful to point out a few distinctive of the method, which has
grown from the Hirsch-Kaiser-Johnson conversation and writings over the
last 15-20 years.

1. The author’s intended meaning expressed in the text is the central
determinant of meaning.
2. An author’s intended meaning statement (To...by) and validation
is the form used for working with the text.
3. A genre-logic (Hirsch, Johnson) formula is used to guide one in
selecting particulars in the text which can be studied further, rather
than “scientifically” exegeting every detail.
4. Antecedent theology (Kaiser) is an integral part of the process,
ultimately leading to the practice of biblical theology.
5. Literary design plays a large role in structuring the message of the
book.
6. Instead of simply applying the text, a more complex reflection is
built into the final step of the method, which leads to the process of
doing theology in culture, as discussed in the Church-Based
Theology paper.

One final note on developing skills in interpreting. Electronic publishing
offers a level of study previously unavailable to most believers. Now, for
about $300 one can purchase a mini-library of reference and language aids
for biblical study that used to cost $2,000 to purchase and forever to use. A
few lessons on how to use the resources, several weeks of practice together
with a plan for regular study, and whole new vistas of understanding can be
opened up.

**PHASE 3: FULLY ENTERING THE COMMUNITY PROCESS**

Once the emerging hermeneutically trained judgment is refined, a lifelong
process begins for all of us. It is probably best to recognize that those who
are leaders ought to approach the whole training process more intensely.
They will have to deal with everything that comes the way of their church,
and need an ever increasing skill in anticipating and dealing with doctrines
of demons (world philosophies) as well as assisting churches and
individuals deal with all sorts of problems. All adults, though, need to be
involved in a serious ordered learning process, which will ever be sharpening their effectiveness in their lives, work, and ministries. As they increasingly master the Scriptures, built upon the foundation of the first principles, they will become more and more mature in their thinking and discernment.

There is a sense in which the community of faith is always using their collective judgment. They have to decide on issues within the community of faith and how to respond to issues outside the church in the culture in which they live. There should be a constant interaction between the leaders, individuals, and the entire community of faith on matters of life, work and ministry. The problem today is that many leaders, most believers, and often entire churches lack any real sense of a critically trained judgment.

These ideas are developed extensively in the paper on Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm. It would be ideal to read it at this time.

CONCLUSION:

Where does all of this lead us? We must get rid of the clergy/laity gap. All Christians must learn to think soundly and critically. We are moving into a whole new era in history—new questions are going to be raised; new philosophies are going to attack the church; new skills are going to be needed by believers in their lives and work.

These are unparalleled times for believers. We are moving into the age of “knowledge workers.” If we can learn to think biblically in every area of our lives, there is no limit to the impact we can make in the world of the 21st century. In addition, since knowledge is the new capital, there is a new premium being set on wisdom. The sharp, perceptive Christian will have a tremendous edge in the information society.

A new paradigm is emerging in hermeneutics—a postmodern paradigm. We must get busy creating a new paradigm within our churches, which is more biblical than at present. We need to infect every believer with the conviction that he or she needs a sharp, hermeneutically trained judgment. We need to move the interpretive process back into the lives of local churches—becoming true hermeneutical communities.

The model set forth in this paper will not be easy to implement in our Western churches. This is not how believers in our churches are oriented. At first it may seem too academic—we are lazy and look for quick fixes. We are talking about changing a whole mindset; but it must be done if we are going to reverse the decline of our churches and impact our Western cultures. The U.S. is already considered to be a post-Christian nation. As we enter the 21st century, we are on the brink of unparalleled opportunity, but unless we begin making some paradigmatic changes in our churches of the magnitude described in this paper, it is likely that the churches in the U.S. will continue to decline.
Many of you here today are from cultures around the world. Most from fairly young churches—few over four generations old. You are entering the same global village in the 21st century as we are in Western cultures. It is just as important, if not more so, that you develop sound trained judgment in the members of your churches. These are unparalleled times. Oh, that we could model for the world of the 21st century, a truly educated person—solid in life skills, fully established in his or her faith!
APPENDIX I: PRINCIPLES OF UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING THE MEANING OF A BIBLICAL TEXT

1. It is assumed, due to the acceptance of a book into the biblical canon, whether it be in the form of a poem, a narrative, a letter, etc., that the book has normative application to churches and believers regardless of cultural milieu or time in history.

2. The meaning of the text that the original author intended to express to his original audience must be clearly understood before it is possible, with any degree of objectivity, to understand its relevance to a contemporary audience.

3. Since the literature of the Bible takes on all different forms as chosen and shaped by the author, often using the cultural forms of his day, it is necessary to pay attention to how he structured the message in order to fully and clearly grasp his intended meaning.

4. The normal conventions of the language in which the biblical text was written must serve as controlling guides to understanding the intended meaning. Unless they are accurately transferred to the normal conventions of the language of a contemporary interpreter, which then serve as controlling guides for his interpretation, then accurate communication can not take place or be validated (literary design).

5. All the particulars in a text (paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words) will logically enhance the author’s intended meaning if it has been clearly understood. Any particulars which conflict with the construed meaning of the text means that either the conception of the author’s intended meaning is inaccurate or the particulars have to be studied more carefully to discover the full range of their use.

6. It is often difficult to fully understand the meaning of a biblical text without understanding Scripture written prior to it, since the biblical texts often refer in brief to preceding texts in the form of partial quotes, words that have taken on special significance, and allusions to events and people who are significant to God dealing with His people.

7. Since any book, section, passage or verse in the Bible also makes up a larger book—the Bible, which itself has unity and continuity—it is essential that this larger context be taken into account before attempting to apply the message today. Once the author’s intended meaning of a text is clearly understood, a biblical text must be placed in the whole canon in order to see clearly its full message and implications for a contemporary audience.

8. All of the above presuppositions are natural to the way we all communicate. At times they may lead to difficult study patterns and point to needed research, but if churches and believers approach the reading of Scripture with an open mind and normal communication processes, these presuppositions enable us to understand the basic message almost instinctively. Our interpretations however, as
instinctive as they might be, ought to be carefully validated in community under the leadership of mature pastors and elders.
APPENDIX II: PROCEDURES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING THE MEANING OF A BIBLICAL TEXT


   a. Begin by addressing the function of the book in the Biblical canon. Unless we have a basic grasp of these divisions and their purposes in the life of the nation of Israel or the early church, it is difficult to understand their meaning as intended by the original authors and accepted by the people of God to whom they were written. This can be accomplished by both carefully reading the books of the division in which the book you are studying is found and by referring to a sound Bible encyclopedia or dictionary for basic information on the structuring of the Jewish Old Testament Canon and the New Testament writings of the early church.

   Canonical divisions:
   
   **Old Testament:**
   - The Law
   - The Prophets
     1. the Former
     2. the Latter Prophets
   - The Writings

   **New Testament:**
   - The Synoptic Gospels
   - Acts and the Pauline Epistles
   - The General (Catholic, Jewish) Epistles
   - John’s Writings

   b. Write a basic statement summarizing the author’s intention, reasoned from the book itself, being careful not to speculate or postulate without good textual evidence. An excellent format for a statement would include a summary statement beginning with the preposition “To” followed by a set of subordinate statements each beginning with the word “by” which trace the argument or structuring of the text as it unfolds.

   Answer three basic questions:
   - What is the author talking about? (subject)
   - What is he saying about the subject? (complement)
   - Why does the author write? (purpose)

   Note: If the book is a compilation written by several authors (i.e. Psalms and Proverbs) just adjust the questions slightly:
   - What are the authors talking about? (subject)
   - What are the authors saying about the subject? (complement)
   - Why was the work compiled?
   - Are there introductory, structural, or arranging or concluding remarks that serve to give an overall purpose to the compilation?
2. Carefully, but simply, outline the book according to its literary design and structure.

a. Become familiar with the literary compositions in the Scriptures. The biblical authors used literary forms to express their writings just as we do today when we write novels, poetry, letters, editorials, etc. Much research has been done to help us become aware of the structures of the day. However, much of what needs to be known about how the biblical authors structured their material can simply be learned from observing consistent patterns in all the books of a similar kind, such as the prophets or the early church letters.

Types of literary composition designs (genres) in the Scriptures:
- Narrative
- Prophetic
- Apocalyptic
- Wisdom
- Hymnic
- Gospel
- Epistle

b. Design a literary outline which reflects the design of the entire book to show its general shape and structure, being careful to allow the literary genre to show its natural structure and beauty rather than forcing it into a typical three point outline.

Note: Three resources:
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, by Elliott Johnson

3. Carefully examine the key parts of the book (sections, passages, paragraphs, sentences, and words), paying attention to any particulars which seem to make a significant contribution or create problems.

a. Expand the literary outline in the section or passage you are examining in order to give you enough shape and specificity to record and visualize how the particulars (paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words) fit into the overall intended meaning and structure of the book. Note: If done well, this will come close to being adequate for a teaching or preaching outline.

b. Examine in detail all the key parts of the section or passage that you are studying, being careful to fit each particular logically into the author’s overall intended meaning for the book. In the traditional grammatical-historical method, which has been dominant since the Reformation, all the particulars are examined in a very methodical manner, which includes sentence diagramming.
and looking up all the words. This can often be very time consuming and leads to frustration, because you can’t see the forest for the trees. We are recommending that your skills be sharp in all types of analysis that can be brought to bear on the text and then, use a reasoning process that avoids examining the obvious, but focuses on particulars (paragraphs, sentences, phrases or words) that seem to be rich in meaning, pivotal in the argument, or difficult to understand.

To determining the meaning of a “particular,” use what E.D. Hirsch calls “genre-logic,” following the simple formula listed below:

- If the author’s overall intended meaning is ________________, and
- if the literary, grammatical, lexical, historical or cultural and antecedent theological research and analysis adds a possible range of meaning for the textual particular (paragraph, sentence, phrase, word),
- then the author’s intended meaning for that particular must be ____________________________.

Types of research and analysis:
- Literary research and analysis: This analysis looks at smaller literary forms rather than the broad compositional design genres, which primarily include:
  (Note: Some of these literary forms will be quite extensive, yet they will fit in one of the larger biblical literary composition design genres listed in the previous section.)
  a. Ancient Near Eastern law and covenant forms
  b. Hebrew poetry and parallelism
  c. Types of Hebrew psalms
  d. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature
  e. Hebrew prophetic sermon
  f. Parables
  g. Allegories
- Grammatical research and analysis: This analysis and research looks at the relationship of paragraphs to passages, of sentences to paragraphs, of phrases to sentences and of words to phrases. Key to this research: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.
- Lexical research and analysis: This research and analysis looks at the semantical range of words, in other words, how many meanings does a dictionary list for this word and which one makes the most sense in this context.

(Note: This is complicated by the fact that the Old Testament is written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek; therefore, the range of options in the English equivalent may be quite different from the range on any given Hebrew or Greek word. Most decisions, however, can be made from the author’s intended
meaning of the book along with the section or passage context, while relying on a good translation of the Bible in one’s own language. There are also many good Greek and Hebrew dictionaries (lexicons) and word study books now available for the English reader.

- Historical and cultural analysis: This research and analysis looks at historical and cultural references in the text and examines them first from any data given in the text, and then from any research and analysis tools such as Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries and any general reference works. (Note: While a study of the culture and historical setting of a given text can be of enormous value in understanding the text, one must be very careful not to reshape the meaning of the text from a fabrication of a historical and cultural issue not addressed or alluded to in the text.)

- Theological research and analysis: This research and analysis looks at any biblical passages, people, or events which are alluded to or quoted in the text (antecedent theology), which are necessary for understanding the text. One of the most common occurrences involves the use of a term which has taken on a specific theological meaning to the people of God who are being addressed in the text, and which has grown progressively in previous biblical texts. For an excellent treatment of this antecedent theological research and analysis see Walter Kaiser’s “Theological Analysis,” chapter six in Toward An Exegetical Theology.

c. Record all significant data in your expanded literary outline. This data will become the body of interpretive material that you can use to teach or preach the passage. Three criteria can help you decide what material to record in the outline:
  - Is it rich in meaning?
  - Is it pivotal in the argument?
  - Is it difficult to understand or easily misunderstood?

4. Relate the message to a contemporary audience by using key insights, principles, and normative truths that are designed to guide the life of the church or believer.

a. Note any changes between the audience originally addressed in the text and the contemporary churches or believers who are applying the message today. Has the change in covenants changed any ways that the passage might be applied?

b. Write all of your conclusions of how this text applies to churches or believers in a particular culture and era in statement form. Keep it to one long sentence, or at the most two to keep the propositional and guideline tone.
Types of propositional statements:

• The main message that lines up most closely with the author’s overall intended meaning.
• Corollary (sub) messages that logically grow out of the main message and are addressed in the text.
• Theological truths that are reinforced or expanded from antecedent texts.
• Issues, contemporary subjects and problems which are not directly addressed in the text but are implicit in the stated messages of the text.
• Specific warnings or corrections that address things generally true of churches or believers in a particular culture or era and fall under the range of the author’s intended meaning, yet are not specifically addressed as problems in the text but are of the same type as those addressed in the text.
• Apologetic data that helps reinforce and strengthen faith, as well as convince the unbelieving.

(Note: These statements become a significant part of what you preach or teach. If done well, the transition to leading a class discussion or preaching a sermon will be relatively easy. Explaining and expanding on a statement can easily make up half of a sermon and greatly add to its relevance.)