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Exegeting Scripture, Exegeting Culture: Combining Exegesis to Fulfill God's Calling

Abstract:

Seminary has separated biblical exegesis from cultural exegesis, teaching them in different programs and seldom requiring them for those outside of those programs. Yet, to fulfill either of these exegetical processes we need both – they are mutually building and supporting entities that only make sense when combined with the other. As teachers, preachers, and leaders of God's Church, it is essential that we learn how to combine these two exegetical processes in order to faithfully live out our calling in God's kingdom. Thus, we must study both biblical and cultural exegesis and learn how to combine the two; for one without the other is knowledge, but combined they form knowledge with the wisdom of how to apply that knowledge. While this seems like a Herculean task, it has been accomplished by many in the history of the Church, often when they did not even know they were doing so. One such previous leader and teacher in the Church is Bishop J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, who's exegetical life made him a renowned name in his own day and continues to challenge us to "do likewise" in our lives.

Keywords: biblical exegesis, cultural exegesis, anthropology, Lesslie Newbigin

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The logo features a stylized cluster of grapes with leaves, positioned above the text "Fruitful Harvest".
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“Indeed, *to know* is a thing that pleaseth talkers and boasters; but *to do* is that which pleaseth God. Not that the heart can be good without knowledge, for without that the heart is naught. There is, therefore, knowledge and knowledge - knowledge that resteth in the bare speculation of things, and knowledge that is accompanied with the grace of faith and love, which puts a man upon doing even the will of God from the heart: the first of these will serve the talker; but without the other, the true Christian is not content. ‘Give me understanding, and I will keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart’ (Psalm 119:34).”

- John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*

Bunyan arrived at this point over three hundred years ago, that knowledge is useless without the wisdom found in the grace and love of God to use it appropriately. This is what has brought all of us to higher education (particularly seminary), to gain both knowledge and wisdom in order to serve God to the fullest of our abilities with the entirety of our lives. God has made all of us seekers of knowledge, but we know intuitively that we will never be satisfied with knowledge unless we also gain the wisdom to use knowledge appropriately in service to God’s mission. One of the first lessons we learn in seminary is the fact that we will never learn everything we need to know to fulfill God’s calling on our lives; so we break knowledge into compartments and discuss the ones we think are most relevant to the futures we envision. While this is good educational practice, it is not good for gaining knowledge and wisdom for the purpose of serving God’s mission. Thus, in this paper I will be discussing two major pieces of seminary education that have spent many generations separated from each other, but in gaining wisdom we come to understand that they actually need each other - biblical exegesis and cultural exegesis.

I propose that it is necessary to combine these two exegetical tasks in order to fulfill God’s calling on our lives and live out our pilgrimage with knowledge, wisdom, and a joyful heart for fulfilling God’s desire. To do this, I will lay forth two main questions: what is the *telos* of biblical exegesis and why does a Christian need to exegete culture? In answering these questions, I will bring up a third question about the possibility of maintaining both exegetical projects in our ministry of teaching and leading in God’s Church. This question will be addressed in the example of Bishop J.E. Lesslie Newbigin.

Exegeting the Gospel

One of the first things taught to aspiring pastors and ministry leaders is the appropriate way to interpret scripture. Often in a class like “Inductive Bible Study” we learn about the process of biblical exegesis, as opposed to eisegetical interpretation. Exegesis is the method by which we discern the meaning of the text through the study of the text itself (and its biblical context), and then apply that meaning to our own contexts. Eisegesis, then, being the reading into the text what we want to get out of it for our context. While exegetical interpretations of 2 Kings 2:23-25 (Elisha cursing the boys who mocked him with a bear mauling) would be much tougher than an eisegetical interpretation of these verses, biblical exegesis has served the church well for centuries. While biblical exegesis may have become second nature to many of us, before we get into the heart of this paper it is necessary to take a quick refresher course in biblical exegesis.

A Basic Outline of Exegetical Method

The history of biblical exegesis is a complicated one, with various forms that reach back centuries, its modern methods are relatively new and recently have received renewed interest (Cahill 2000). Within the more modern phenomenon of exegetical studies many methods have been developed. It may be helpful to think of a tree; with biblical exegesis being the trunk, three main branches, and then many stems and leaves sprouting from each of those branches. With this being an overview of exegetical method, we will only identify those branches and briefly discuss their relevance to the overall concept of merging biblical and cultural exegesis.

Biblical exegesis, according to Michael J. Gorman, can be broken down into three main branches or approaches - synchronic, diachronic, and existential (Gorman 2009: 13). The synchronic approach tends to look most explicitly at the text, with some cultural scope of the original writer’s culture factored into its analysis; utilizing methods of literary criticism, narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism, lexical/grammatical/syntactical analysis, semantic or discourse analysis, and socio-scientific criticism (Ibid.: 13-14). This approach tends towards a more literary focus of interpreting scripture within its own historical context. Then there is a diachronic approach, which tends towards more analysis of the development of the biblical text over time, as well as the development of its interpretation and includes: textual criticism, historical linguistics, form criticism, tradition criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, and historical criticism (together

this approach is often referred to as the historical-critical method) (Ibid: 15-16). Lastly there is the existential approach, which focuses on reading scripture “as something to be engaged” for the purposes of some end - often an encounter with the reality beyond the text itself - and includes the methods of: theological exegesis/missional interpretation/spiritual reading, canonical criticism, embodiment, and ideological criticism/advocacy criticism/liberationist exegesis (Ibid: 18-19). This approach is often used in less formal settings than the classroom or the pulpit. Each one of these approaches can be used to teach the Gospel to a culture, but the exegetical approach alone does not necessarily mean that the Gospel will be understood by the receiving culture.

No matter which approach you prefer, the reality of the necessity for biblical exegesis does not escape us as we search to fulfill our calling as teachers of the Word of God. While these approaches give us the modes for which to approach scripture, exegesis as a whole provides the foundation to our approaching of scripture for the goal of teaching scripture. Thus, it is necessary to also look at biblical exegesis as a whole, not just its methodological parts, in order to start to gain the needed wisdom to appropriately apply the various exegetical methods.

The Foundation of Our Biblical Study & Interpretation

In its most basic form, “[E]xegesis may be defined as the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text,” particularly a specific text of Christian scripture (Gorman 2009: 10). This definition seems simple enough, but those with experience in biblical exegesis will tell you that it is much more complicated when you actually approach the exegetical task. There are many methods and approaches to biblical exegesis (as seen above) that complicate the learning and application of this interpretive process. As Christians, we also cannot deny the spiritual reality of biblical exegesis as well. Matthew Levering discusses biblical exegesis (in the historical-critical method) “as an ongoing participation in God’s active providence, both metaphysically and Christologically-pneumatologically” (Levering 2008: 1). Which means that while we engage with humanly created methods of interpreting scripture both within the biblical context and for our context, we are also engaging a spiritual act of participating in Christ. This raises the question of the *telos* of such a spiritual act. While discipleship and greater spiritual intimacy with the Lord is a tremendous result of spiritually participating in the interpretation of scripture, if that were the only reason

then we would never have to relay what we have learned from the exegetical process - it would only be for our spiritual edification. Yet, exegesis is an eminently other-focused activity, even while both the physical and spiritual activity of exegesis are edifying to the individual, exegesis is meant for the community. This brings us back to the question of what is the ultimate end of biblical exegesis? But before we venture to answer that question, we must also look at the second portion of this article, cultural exegesis.

Exegeting Culture

The second component of this discussion is the exegesis of culture. Often cordoned off in missiology or intercultural studies programs within the teaching of anthropology or sociology, exegesis of culture is a necessity in relating the Gospel to those who have never heard the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Typically, missionaries use elements of anthropology and sociology¹ in order to study culture and find culturally appropriate ways to deliver the Gospel to non-Christians. Undergirding this was the idea that the West was already Christian and therefore their culture was already molded around the Gospel, thus the location for missions was in non-Western cultures. The validity of this assumption can be debated, but it was this assumption that pushed the study of culture into the realm of missions. So let us take a quick look at the role of exegeting culture within its traditional discipline of missiology.

The Role of Anthropology/Sociology

As the academic study of missiology grew in the Twentieth Century, anthropology was closely linked to it, with several prominent missiologists of the mid-century acquiring anthropology degrees.² Anthropology, or more specifically cultural anthropology, strives “to look beyond the world of everyday experiences to discover the patterns and meanings that lie behind the world” (Robbins 2009: 2). As a discipline of the social sciences, anthropology has provided the theories and methods by which missionaries have studied culture in order to properly contextualize the Gospel so that different societies could understand the message of the Good News. This study, often utilizing qualitative methods, has provided insights to missionaries in order for them to minister to local communities.

For example, the use of linguistic anthropology in the translation of scriptures, whereby linguistics is used to understand culture, then in turn the missionaries utilize both linguistics and anthropology to craft the

translation of scripture. While this is not the only example of anthropology being used in the field, it is the easiest to identify. Now we are in a place in the history of missions where the overwhelming majority of a macro-level culture has been investigated and the Gospel preached, thus we need to move toward more micro-level investigations, and investigations into responses to contextualization. Robert Montgomery concludes, "... what is needed most now in missiology is not the study of mission efforts, as important as these have been and are, but a serious study of the *reasons for the wide variations in response* to the Christian gospel from the peoples of the world" (Montgomery 2012: 289). Such studies must engage both the qualitative methods of anthropology and the quantitative methods of sociology in order to gain a better understanding the variations of micro-cultures and the differences of responses to the gospel in various cultures.³ But no matter which methods are chosen, the use of the social sciences is essential for the present and future of missiology and the spreading of the Gospel around the globe.

While we have discussed the role of anthropology and sociology within missiology, there remains an underlying question that we have not addressed, why does a Christian need to exegete culture anyway? It is this question, and the question of the goal of exegeting scripture posed above, that we will turn to next.

Combining Biblical & Cultural Exegesis

In each of the above sections we have uncovered some very important questions. What is the end of biblical exegesis? Why would a Christian need to focus on cultural exegesis? The answer to both of these questions lies in the combining of these two exegeses in order to serve God's calling to bear witness to the Gospel and disciple others to do the same. The concept of *missio Dei* points to the reality that as teachers, preachers, and leaders in God's Church it is our responsibility to bear witness to God's salvific actions throughout the world. "The mission can be nothing else than the continuation of the saving activity of God through the publication of the deeds of salvation" (Vicedom 1965: 9). Thus, by combining biblical exegesis with cultural exegesis we can fulfill this commission to bear witness to salvation in Jesus Christ through biblically sound and culturally relevant publications (in word and deed) of the salvific activities of God.

We have already seen the absolute necessity of biblical exegesis for all Christian communities. For the most effective use of anthropology/sociology within missiology we look towards contextualization. Contextualization has had a unique history, filled with starts and stops of usage and effectiveness in missions (Hiebert 1987), yet it still remains the most effect tool of the missionary to reach people with the Gospel. For Gospel contextualization to be effective and true to scripture, we must heed the advice of Paul Hiebert and engage in a process of critical contextualization. Hiebert's critical contextualization utilizes three key steps: first is the exegesis of culture (gathering evidence about local customs and beliefs). It is important to note that exegeting of culture comes first only so we know what questions we wish to investigate within scripture. No one exegetes scripture blind, but they are influenced by their cultural perspectives and questions. Knowing the questions that culture is asking about the world or the assumption that a culture is operating within allows us the chance to ask "what does scripture say about that" and begin proper exegesis to discover the answer. But we have to make sure that our exegesis of culture does not pre-determine the answers we seek in scripture – this would be sliding into eisegesis and leads to syncretism.

The second step is an exegetical look at scripture and utilization of the hermeneutical bridge – this includes engagement with the global and historical hermeneutical community. This hermeneutical community includes the local church, the local Christian community, and then widens out in ever increasing circles to incorporate the entire global community. This means that we must be in fellowship with the global Church and ask this global community for evaluation and feedback of our hermeneutical outcomes. As well, we must investigate historical hermeneutics in order to determine whether our interpretations align with historical orthodoxy. Combined, these elements of local, global, and historical communities make up the hermeneutical bridge. Within this hermeneutical bridge, Hiebert points out that the leader must be cross-culturally nimble and able to translate between the biblical and congregational culture to the new culture so that those who hear the Gospel can grasp a clear understanding of it (Hiebert 1987: 109-110).

Lastly in Hiebert's model is the critical response of believers, both old and new, to reflect upon "their own past customs in the light of their new biblical understandings, and to make decisions regarding their response to their new-found truths" (Ibid: 110). Thus, it is essential that this process

happen within and by the full local congregation, and that the leaders of each local congregation properly teach its members how to do this type of critical contextualization both individually and as a community. Thus, even in the old Christian heartlands of Western Culture, we must engage with critical contextualization as culture has changed and so have we. What is most remarkable about Hiebert's model of critical contextualization is that it can be used around the globe, in any culture, at any level, so that any teacher of the Gospel, missionary or not, can lead their community through this process; and its reliance on biblical exegesis to make sense of the cultural exegesis that pushes Hiebert's model to scriptural fidelity.

Contextualization is not a wholly new topic either. New Testament scholar Dean Flemming in 2005 investigated the New Testament to identify and develop the patterns of contextualization that already exist within scripture. The most prominent (but definitely not the only) example of New Testament contextualization is Paul's time in Athens in Acts 17:16-24. In this passage Paul spends time learning the city, seeing the religious culture that abounds, and approaches the culture of Athens in their traditional way - teaching on the Areopagus. Flemming would also point to Jesus as the true and original model of contextualization that we should follow, as Christ contextualized himself in the Incarnation and then within the rituals of the Jewish culture of his day (Flemming 2005: 20-23). It is this model that we see repeated, in different versions, throughout the New Testament, to which Flemming would call the local church to enter into. This is because culture changes, as well as the local church. Thus, there must always be a cycle of contextualizing by exegeting the Bible, exegeting culture, then evaluating culture by the light of scripture. The only issue is whether or not we, the leaders of the local church, will facilitate or hinder contextualization. "The question is not *whether* they (the local church) will contextualize, but *how well* they will contextualize" (Moreau 2018: 230). Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers and leaders in the local church to make sure that this contextualization happens in a thorough, critical, Hiebertian way; teaching their community to continually critically contextualize.

By using Hiebert's model we have an approach that necessitates the merging of biblical and cultural exegesis for the purposes of witnessing to the Gospel both within our own culture and to new cultures (both macro- and micro-) that we come into contact with during our pilgrimage of knowledge and wisdom to fulfill God's calling. We have also seen that contextualization is both old and continuous. The only question that

remains is whether or not we can actually maintain faithfulness to both biblical exegesis and cultural exegesis while we combine them. To answer that question we will turn to the example of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin.

An Exegetical Life: Lesslie Newbigin

Bishop James Edward Lesslie Newbigin was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England on December 9, 1909, and while he grew up in a Christian home it was through the ministry of the Student Christian Movement at the University of Cambridge that he became a Christian (Weston 2006: 1 and James n.d.). After serving with the SCM at the University of Glasgow (where he met his wife Helen) and returning to Cambridge for theological training at Westminster College, the Newbigin applied for mission service to India with the Church of Scotland (Weston 2006: 2-6).

Lesslie, as he preferred to be called, and his wife Helen enter missionary service in southern India in the fall of 1936 and began language training, which was cut short due to a bus accident that broke Newbigin's leg and after unsuccessful treatment in India, required the couple to return to England (Wainwright 2000: 4-5). Newbigin served in an administrative role for the foreign missions committee of the Church of Scotland during his recovery, and three years after they first left, he and Helen (with their baby girl Margaret) finally returned to Kanchipuram, India to begin the missions ministry they were called to there (Ibid.: 5). Early on Newbigin became involved with the movement to unify the churches of South India and during his furlough of 1946-47 this project was completed, with Newbigin being elected as one of the new Church of South India's (CSI) founding bishops over the diocese of Madurai and Ramnad (Ibid.: 6-7).

Newbigin would spend the rest of his days in India serving both as a church leader and as an international defender of the South India scheme for unification, which made him a popular figure in the ecumenical movement of the mid-Twentieth Century. "The 'South India miracle' quickly made Newbigin a prominent figure in the growing international ecumenical scene" (James n.d.). He spend years traveling abroad to ecumenical meetings, both to the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the newly formed World Council of Churches (WCC), as well as many other international gatherings considering ecumenism and church unification. By the end of the 1950's, with an agreed upon merging of the IMC and WCC, the IMC asked Newbigin to lead their merger with the WCC and then become the first head of the WCC's Division of World

Mission and Evangelism (CWME) after the planned 1961 merger at the New Delhi consultation (Weston 2006: 9-10). Though reluctant to leave India, the CSI granted his release for five years to oversee this integration project (Ibid.: 9). Giving himself to the task of tackling the integration of these two organizations, Newbiggin traveled the world and wrote extensively on issues related to this integration and set up the early movements of the CWME as its first director (Newbiggin 1993: 158-201).

Newbiggin returned to India in 1965, this time being elected as Bishop of Madras, a major city within the CSI, which effectively elevated him in responsibility and status to the top levels of the ecclesial hierarchy of the CSI, as well as his selection to top level leadership (Ibid.: 202-225). Here Newbiggin tackled the needs of a large city and a large diocese, engaging in “fairly extensive social work in the slums of the city” as a means of obedience to Christ to meet human need and towards bringing about the conversion of those being served (Wainwright 2000: 145).

In 1974, at the retirement age of 65 and desiring to open a bishop-level position for the elevation of an Indian leader, Newbiggin retired from the CSI and returned to Birmingham, England (Weston 2006: 11-12). His retirement did not last long as he took a post teaching missiology and ecumenism at the Selly Oak College in Birmingham for the next five years (James n.d.). After Newbiggin had decided to retire for a second time, he argued for and eventually took up the leadership of United Reformed Church in inner-city Birmingham, working as its pastor for seven more years before retiring for a third time (Weston 2006: 12). Throughout the 1980's and 1990's Newbiggin became a popular speaker and writer, until his passing on January 30, 1998 (Wainwright 2000: 14-16). It was during these retirement years that many of his most significant texts were written.

Going back to his first retirement, the Newbiggins took an overland trip to get from Madras to France before sailing for England; a long desired trek through regions that had once been the heartlands of Christianity (Weston 2006: 11-12). In Cappadocia they were forced to worship on their own because they could not find any other Christians on Sunday morning (Ibid.: 12). It was this episode that would direct much of Newbiggin's theological and missiological attention in his retirement years. “This had a profound effect upon Lesslie and helped to energize his later reflections on European culture, for it brought home just how completely a once-strong Christian heritage could all but disappear” (Ibid.: 12). It is these reflections that would come out in some of his most famous works - *The Other Side*

of 1984, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, and *Proper Confidence* (Ibid.: 13).

Newbigin's writings have an enduring legacy, especial those writings that came after his initial retirement from India. But it was a lifetime of reading, writing, and doing that gave his ideas their longevity. "During his lifetime, Newbigin was highly regarded both as an ecumenical and missionary statesman, and as a cross-cultural missiologist of the first order" (Weston 2012: 10). While this accrued reputation gave him latitude in his writings, since he often "lack(ed) the numerous footnotes characteristics of formal academic pieces" it also provided him with the gravitas to voice his critiques and new ideas in his retirement writings (Ibid.: 11). "Newbigin's return to the UK was also the prelude to a period of intense activity, reflection and writing for which he was to become perhaps best known" (Ibid.: 15). It was a lifetime of experiences that gave him the perspective to reflect on Western Christianity and call for a renewal of the Western Church; and this call was so spectacular that it still challenges us today. "The fact that *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* continues to resonate and reverberate with a wide range of people, twenty-five years on, surely owes a good deal to the provenance offered by that Glasgow classroom" (Shenk 2015: 47).

But this enduring legacy is not just of an excellent theologian and missionary who rang the bells of renewal for the Western Church; it is also a legacy of combining biblical and cultural exegesis. There are dozens of examples that I could look at concerning Newbigin's biblical and cultural exegesis, but in the following sections I turn to one specific example of each of these exegetical practices and then follow with a discussion of Newbigin's exegetical combination.

Practicing Biblical Exegesis

During his time as General Secretary of the International Missionary Council, Newbigin produced a small bible study addressing the issues of Christian unity called *Is Christ Divided?* This small study of four chapters takes on a verse(s) in each chapter and applies biblical exegetical methods to understand that verse and applying it to the issue of church unity. The first chapter uses John 12:32 in a discussion about Christ being lifted up and drawing all humanity to himself (Newbigin 1961: 5). In this chapter he uses an exegetical (linguistics) approach to break down the words of this verse and determines that in the sight of the risen Lord our divisions are a sinful splintering of the Church (Ibid.: 9-10). The second chapter looks

at 1 Cor. 12:13 for an understanding of the unity of all in Christ. “Here you have the dimensions of the Church’s being set forth in their barest simplicity. The material - all sorts and conditions of men, Jews or Greeks, slave or free, mankind in all its variety; the form - one body marked off from the world by the act of baptism; the agent - one mighty Spirit, the Spirit of God” (Ibid.: 11). Thus, in the Church all are united together through the Spirit in the Lordship of Christ. Chapter three investigates the reason for this unity, finding in John 17:22-23 Christ’s determination that his followers be one as he is one with the Father, for the glory of the Father (Ibid.: 18-19). Chapter four then takes a look at Mark 13:6-10 as a commissioning of the unified Church to glorify God to all the nations, even amidst the changes of the times (Ibid.: 26-41). In this small book Newbigin searches the scriptures for answers to the issues of unity that he and the IMC were facing as they entered this integration process with the WCC. In this, he models a way of exegeting scripture in order to address contemporary problems, but this is not the only exegesis that Newbigin engages in throughout his life.

Modeling Cultural Exegesis

Another small book of Newbigin’s, produced in the mid-1950’s, was an English translation of the doctrine and catechesis manual he produced for rural Tamil churches, *Sin and Salvation*. This book provides the foundational questions and answers that were needed to catechize converts in the rural Tamil-speaking villages in south India (Newbigin 1956: 7-10). This book was originally produced for the indigenous leaders and teachers who were traveling to these villages and teaching these issues to new converts, thus its original publication in Tamil. Newbigin had studied deeply the Hindu culture of India and used language of contradiction and harmony to begin to depict the ideas of sin and salvation (Ibid.: 11-15). He also focused on the Hindu values of family and social interaction (Toropov and Buckles 1997: 121) in order to discuss the community of Christian faith (Newbigin 1956: 92-114). All of this coming from his deep study and even admiration for the culture in which he was ministering, in order that he may properly contextualize the Gospel for local peoples to hear, understand, and accept the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ. But this cultural exegesis was only possible because simultaneously he was engaged in biblical exegesis.

Combining the Two

Newbigin dedicated his life to ministry and missions, which drew him to simultaneous exegesis of scripture and culture. It is in the combination in Newbigin that we see the *telos* of biblical exegesis and the reasoning of cultural exegesis - to bear witness to the Gospel among all the Nations of the world. His scriptural exegesis garnered him international acclaim and respect as “he was elected chair of the high-powered” Committee of Twenty-Five, which prepared the theological discussions for the 1954 WCC meeting at Evanston⁴ (James: n.d.). He exegeted culture as well, both within Tamil-speaking India and on his return to England. It is his understanding of Hindu, and specifically Tamil, culture that gives Newbigin the credibility to later write in his theology of mission that: “A real meeting with a partner of another faith must mean being so open to him or her that the other’s way of looking at the world becomes a real possibility for us” (Newbigin 1995: 184). The only thing holding us back from adopting the views of the religious other is our relationship with Jesus Christ, fostered by a deep reading and interpreting of scripture. So Newbigin modeled throughout his life both the necessity and the possibility of combining scriptural and cultural exegesis, all for the purpose of bearing witness to the Gospel.

Newbigin’s biblical exegesis allowed him to properly share the Gospel in biblically sound and orthodox ways. His cultural exegesis allowed Newbigin to properly share the Gospel in culturally relevant and understandable ways. Thus, in the life of Lesslie Newbigin we see that it is necessary to combine biblical and cultural exegesis in order to fully practice both.

Like Newbigin, we too must learn how to merge these exegetical processes for the purposes of teaching and ministering the Word in the cultures and places where God has called us. Even if we are not called to places on the other side of the world, learning how to exegete the micro-cultural differences on the other side of town is essential for presenting a properly exegeted scripture.

Conclusion

Biblical exegesis and cultural exegesis, like biblical studies and missiology, have been separated in the academic world in order to adequately teach both. Yet, learning just one of these exegetical processes is like gaining knowledge without gaining the wisdom to know how to apply that knowledge. In particular for those who are called to teach, preach, and

lead within God's Church, it is necessary to gain the knowledge of both exegetical processes. Once we have gained that knowledge we can start to merge them together in the ministries of the Word that God has called us into, thus gaining the wisdom of application. For if we are truly pilgrims of the Kingdom of God, living between the current and future realities of God's reign, then we must always be studying culture in order to properly apply the Bible to our context. And it is in this combination of exegetical processes that we enter into the joy of fulfilling God's will to exercise knowledge with wisdom to share the Gospel and further discipleship.

End Notes

¹ The methods and theories of anthropology and sociology are too large for a discussion here, but for most missiological programs a form of ethnographic cultural anthropology is the preferred approach to exegeting culture.

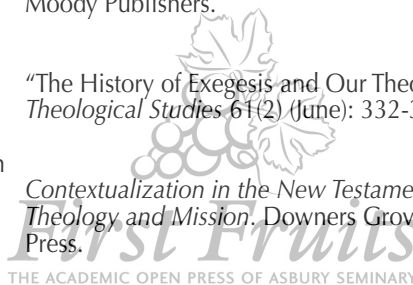
² The history of missiology and anthropology is a complicated one, but you can see in the prominence of missiologists like Alan Tippett, Chuck Kraft, Paul Hiebert, Dan Shaw, Bob Priest, Darrell Whiteman, and others who studied anthropology in order to enter the mission field or teach missiology. Though this connection has been debated by the likes of Whiteman, Priest, and others, it is undeniable that there has been a link between missiology and anthropology for decades.

³ cf. Montgomery 2012: 283.

⁴ A committee that included Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Reinhold Niebuhr amongst its illustrious members.

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