

# Christian Professional Training for Practitioners

© Arthur Jones

## Introduction

Over the last eighteen years (as of 2013) I have been involved in developing and teaching a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses that present and evaluate Christian perspectives.

From 1995 to 1997 I developed and taught undergraduate *Science and Religion* Certificate and Diploma courses for John Stott's *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* (LICC, <http://www.licc.org.uk/>), which were accredited by London University's Birkbeck College. In 1996-7 I ran a similar Certificate and Diploma course for Bristol University's Department of Continuing Education. From 2000 to 2010 I was developing and teaching courses for educational practitioners: from 2000-2005, a distance-learning Cert HE course on *Education Policy* for Sarum College, Salisbury; from 2005-2010, a distance-learning Masters course *Faith in Schools*, for the Stapleford Centre in Nottingham. Since 2009, I have been running and developing a Foundation Degree mission-based evangelist education and training programme for the *Church Army* in Sheffield, UK.

From my experience in running these courses, plus work I have done with other groups of Christian professionals, I have come to two main conclusions:

- (1) A realisation of how much we (Christians) have been misled by the secular/sacred dualism that has dominated Western Christianity in the modern era (see Greene, 2010). In particular, it is not true that it is only those going into Church related ministries, or into Christian mission, who require specifically Christian education and training.
- (2) I have been forcibly struck by how much of a Christian professional curriculum is actually generic, *i.e.* comprising content that ought to be part of any Christian professional training whatsoever, indeed – in appropriate form – part of the education of *any* Christian (*c.f.* *Church-based and Community-centered Higher Education* (CaCHE), <http://cacheglobal.net>)

**Part A** provides a rationale for these conclusions and **Part B** considers what, at this stage in my experience and reflection, I think should be part of such a generic programme of Christian education and training.

**Ref:** Greene, Mark (2010) *The Great Divide*. London, LICC.

## Part A Rationale for a Generic Professional Training Course for Christian Practitioners

### 1 Introduction – The Problem We Face in Our Western Societies Today

**1.1** Today we live in a world where even many Christians do not recognize, or appreciate the extent of secular indoctrination. By ‘secularism’ I mean *living as if God does not exist and faith is not relevant*. In a secular (or secularist) society, public life – including government, business, education and the media – operates without reference to God, religion, or faith. The assumption is that it is possible to do so – that one can live without any particular (‘sectarian’ *sic*) religious or ideological commitments. It is assumed that universal human reason, or scientific reason in particular, can provide a sufficient basis for human life and one that is free from cultural, religious or philosophical commitments (‘prejudices’ *sic*).

**1.2** This secularist environment is most evident in the realm of professional training. People are trained to work in the professions as if God does not exist. Throughout their training they will receive the explicit or implicit message that, in order to be professional and objective, they must not bring their religion, or personal religious values or faith into their public, professional work.

This stance is not (yet) required by any law, but, in a pluralist society, it can seem so obvious, so reasonable, that many Christians accept it.

**1.3** In fact the demand is very problematic. Indeed, it is discriminatory and morally indefensible. We can see that this is so by considering a particular profession in more detail. We’ll look at school and college education (the following discussion is adapted from the Norwegian Christian educationalist, Signe Sandsmark, 2000:87. See also Clouser, 2005, Cooling, 2010, and Copley, 2005):

Christians training to be school or college teachers will, explicitly or implicitly, receive something like the following message:

In order to be professional and neutral in your practice, you must not talk about God in a way that implies that God actually exists. You must not pray with students. You must not talk as if moral norms and commandments are objective or universal. You must not base your curriculum on the assumption that human beings are created for a purpose. You must not teach science as if the world is intelligently designed.

In today’s pluralist society that can sound only right and proper. The problem with it is exposed if we ask a complementary question: “What, then, should agnostics and atheists try to do, and avoid doing, if they also are to be ‘neutral’, ‘objective’ and ‘professional’ and not impose their atheism or agnosticism on their students?”

**1.3** The empirical answer is ‘Nothing’, in other words the question reveals that our educational practice is already effectively atheistic (operating *as if there is no God*) – so hardly neutral. Non-religious pupils and teachers will feel perfectly at home,

whereas religious believers will not. But if we consider the implicit logic of the question, then a different response is required. If, in order to be professional, religious teachers are to teach in a way that hides their real beliefs – to teach *as if their religious faith is not true, or, at least, not relevant to their public life* – then shouldn't atheist teachers do likewise? Maybe they should teach as if they were religious believers – as if, e.g., they were Buddhists, Jews or Muslims!

Clearly it is not possible for education to be neutral.

**1.4** Today it is widely recognised amongst scholars that the demand for neutrality is nonsense and that all human life operates on the basis of commitments that cannot be justified by reason or science alone, but that have to be held *before* one can reason or do science at all. Any variety of secularism (secular humanism, secular materialism ...) has its own foundational commitments which have at least a quasi-religious nature (Clouser 2005, Nagel, 2012, Plantinga 2011, Sandmark 2000). Arguably secular materialism is not only not neutral, but potentially harmful, even very harmful, for both the individual and society (contact me for my paper *Culture of Death: Secularism and Its Consequences for Family and Society*).

**1.5** Simply not mentioning God or faith is in no sense 'neutral'. This was quite clear to an older generation of Christian scholars and rightly so. In 1949, Sir Walter Moberly (who had been Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University) wrote:

"If in your organization, your curriculum, and your communal customs and ways of life, you leave God out, you teach with tremendous force that, for most people and at most times, He does not count ... It is a fallacy to suppose that by omitting a subject you teach nothing about it. On the contrary you teach that it is to be omitted, and that it is therefore a matter of secondary importance. And you teach this not openly and explicitly, which would invite criticism; you simply take it for granted and thereby insinuate it silently, insidiously, and all but irresistibly. If indoctrination is bad, this sort of conditioning and preconscious habituation is surely worse ... if a planner of atheistic conviction and Machiavellian astuteness had been at work, he could hardly have wrought more cunningly." (Moberly, 1949:56)

William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time of the 1944 Education Act, was similarly clear that a 'neutral' or secular curriculum could be a powerful indoctrinator into atheism:

"There is no possibility of neutrality ... To be neutral concerning God is the same thing as to ignore Him ... If the children are brought up to have an understanding of life in which ... there is no reference to God, you cannot correct the effect of that by speaking about God for a certain period of the day." (quoted by Iremonger, 1948: 571, who is then quoted by Copley 2000: 56)

**1.6** We now live in a society that inoculates us against the Gospel. Secular materialism is not a neutral, default position for real, liberal democracies. Rather it creates an environment in which religious believers become those who are most at risk of facing disrespect and the rubbishing of their beliefs. In other words, the great risk of indoctrination in our schools and societies today is not from religion, but from

secularism (Carey & Carey, 2012, Copley 2005; *cf.* Cooling 2010, Fraser 1999, Greenawalt 2005, Nord 1995, Norman 2002, Sandsmark 2000, Sommerville 2006, Trigg 2012). As a result most young people are indoctrinated against religion before they have a chance to consider any religion seriously.

**1.7** But the situation is even worse than already indicated. Secularism has become embedded in our churches. Brian Walsh (1992: 16) describes the dominant form of Western secularism as the service of the three gods of scientism, technicism and economism. He writes:

More foundationally this is the worldview that captivates the *imagination* of our society. We experience our lives in its terms. Looking at life with this worldview is as natural as breathing for us. Because, after all, it is in the air everywhere, *and the church provides no gas mask.* (emphasis added)

Similarly, Edward Norman (2002: ix-x) suggests that:

... it is secular Humanism, as an unconscious orientation of life and thought, and entertained in an inarticulate and unrecognised form, which has with frightening frequency infiltrated the church members' perception of their own religion. Christianity is not being *rejected* in modern society – what is causing the decline of public support for the Church is the insistence of church leaders themselves in representing secular enthusiasm for humanity as core Christianity. ... It is not the general secularisation as such which has felled it [the Church], but the adoption by the Church of secular thought – death by one's own hand.

**1.8** In our churches the secularist problem is compounded by a dualism that confines Christian life to personal morality, personal evangelism and the church programme (Greene, 2010). The great range of jobs and professions, in which the vast majority of Christians will spend their lives, are not on the radar of most Christian leaders. There is often an implicit hierarchy in which most professions are discounted and some are regarded as ones to be avoided. Not much has changed since John Stott's statement of 1975:

We are often given the impression that if a young Christian man (*sic*) is really keen for Christ he will undoubtedly become a foreign missionary, that if he is not quite as keen as that he will stay at home and become a pastor, that if he lacks the dedication to be a pastor, he will no doubt serve as a doctor or teacher, while those who end up in social work or the media or (worst of all) in politics are not far removed from serious backsliding! (Stott, 1975: 31)

Being unprepared and ill equipped to thrive, or even just survive in a secularist world, large numbers of children from Christian families will have left any active Christian commitment by their twenties.

**1.9** The social statistics bear this out. For example, in the UK today, almost 100% of unbelieving parents successfully pass on their unbelief to their children, but barely 50% of Christian parents succeed in passing on their Christian faith. If there is only one believing parent, the figure falls to 25% (Crockett & Voas 2006, NatCen Social

Research 2011, Voas 2005, Voas & Crockett 2005). Of young people who have been active in church life, 60-80% will have left any real practice of the Faith by their twenties. The falling away at college or university is huge, but their leaving active Christian commitment almost certainly roots back to earlier experience in church life (Kinnaman 2011). It should not need saying that this is a dire situation and that addressing it should be high on the agenda of every Christian leader.

---

## 2 What, Then, Should We Do?

**2.1** It is Christian communities that make the Gospel believable – or implausible. Christian conversion and Christian formation normally occur in the context of community. If the church (Christian community) of which we are part, makes the Gospel plausible, believable, then the work of an evangelist will not only be easier (much less embarrassing?), but it is likely to be much more effective. The trouble is that most of us have been so successfully indoctrinated by secularism, that we profess Christianity, but live as if (usually some eclectic variety of) secularism is true.

The sad truth revealed above is that in fact church members can – by their individual and corporate lives – make the Gospel unbelievable and secularism more plausible.

**2.2** Christian community is not just ecclesiastical, not just the church building and all the church-related organisations, functions and programmes. Christian community ought to embrace the many different aspects of community life. Within the larger Christian community there may be business communities of the Christians in local firms, artistic communities of networks of Christian artists, educational communities of Christians in schools and colleges, and so on. It is these that primarily make God and Redemption visible in the neighbourhood – or not. In our Christian communities people are being shaped and disciplined. Are they being disciplined to work in the secular world in secular ways, or to regard church-related ministries as the only true option for *really* committed Christians? Or are they being disciplined to make God visible in every profession and walk of life?

**2.3** In the prophetic words of Lesslie Newbigin, the church (Christian community) must be the “hermeneutic of the gospel”:

“If the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society, if Christians are to occupy the “high ground” which they vacated in the noon-time of “modernity”, it will not be by forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns. Once again it has to be said that there can be no going back to the “Constantinian” era. It will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known, and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God’s redeeming grace for the whole life of society.” (Lesslie Newbigin 1989: 232-233. The

chapter title (ch 18, pp 222-233) is “The Congregation as Hermeneutic of the Gospel”)

**2.4** We must change our thinking. It is not just those preparing for church-related ministries that require Christian education and training. In today’s secularist environment, Christians preparing for any profession whatsoever – indeed all Christians! – need appropriate Christian education and training. The problem is that such education and training is currently almost unavailable.

**2.5** In the UK we lack a Christian tertiary sector (other than Bible and Theological colleges and missionary training colleges). This means that (unlike in North America, Australasia and elsewhere) Christian education and training are just not available, or on the radar for most Christians. There is currently – as far as I (AJ) am aware – no Christian (initial or in-service) training course for the vast majority of Christian professionals. This is a massive gap in the UK Christian education and training scene. Furthermore most Christian professionals receive no input or support from their churches and church leaders (Hudson, 2012). Consequently dualism is dominant in the training for Christians that does exist, often even in the training for church-related ministries, *i.e.* the training is essentially the same as that (which would be) provided by secularists, but with the addition of teaching about, *e.g.*, personal evangelism, leading Bible studies, and maintaining personal integrity.

**2.6** My experience in a range of Christian training programmes over the last 17 years is that, given the almost universal absence of church promotion and support, any programme of training developed for a specific profession in the UK (*e.g.* teaching) is unlikely to attract enough takers to be financially viable after any set-up funding runs out. Therefore I propose that the first limb of our strategy must be:

- to develop a programme of education and training for Christian practitioners in general, whether church-related or not.

**2.7** But even if we can create an excellent programme designed to appeal to Christian practitioners generally, the absence of such education and training from the understanding and vision of church leaders, means that we will still be unlikely to attract enough takers. This suggests that the second limb of an effective strategy must be:

- to spread (evangelise) the vision and find partners who will promote the vision to their constituencies.

---

### 3 Conclusion

**3.1** We need to develop courses that are generic for those who are Christian practitioners in any profession whatever. This suggests a programme with a set of core modules followed by every participant and sets of optional modules followed by those in the different professions or areas of work.

**3.2** Our understanding of God’s mission in the world (*missio Dei*) directly correlates with what we understand to be the extent of God’s redemptive action. If *missio Dei* is

bigger than redeeming individual souls, extending as far as the curse is found, then “the resurrection of Jesus means that God is renewing the cosmos, society, and communities, as well as individuals.” (Kirk 2011: 198). This is the *missio Dei* story that should shape how individually and corporately we understand our calling into the many realms of daily life and work. Such an outworking will make the Gospel visible and plausible. It will create a Christian community that provokes the questions to which the Gospel is the answer (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

**3.3** Shouldn't this be the vision for any Christian Education and Training worthy of the name? Shouldn't we be motivated by such a vision and provide education and training that facilitates its implementation? Shouldn't our Christian communities educate and train not only those who work in the church and church programmes, but also provide Christian education and training for all those other practitioners (not just those we call 'professionals') who, in playing their part in the local and global outworking of Redemption, will help to make the kingdom of God visible? How else will the Gospel become believable in an otherwise Godless context? How else will not just individuals be changed, but the whole culture be transformed?

© Dr Arthur Jones, February 2013

---

## 4 Bibliography for Part A

- Carey, George & Carey, Andrew (2012) *We Don't Do God: The Marginalisation of Public Faith*. Oxford, Monarch Books (Lion Hudson).
- Clouser, Roy (2005) *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Cooling, Trevor (2010) *Doing God in Education*, London: Theos
- Cooling, Trevor (2011) *Is God Redundant in the Classroom?* (Inaugural Lecture, 09 June 2011). Canterbury, Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University (<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/education/nicer/Documents/IsGodRedundantintheclassroom9thJune2011.pdf>, accessed 05 November 2011)
- Copley, Terence (2000) *Spiritual Development in the State School: A Perspective on Worship and Spirituality in the Education System of England and Wales*. Exeter, University of Exeter Press.
- Copley, Terence (2005) *Indoctrination, Education and God: The Struggle for the mind*. London, SPCK.
- Crockett, Alasdair & Voas, David (2006) Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Britain, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45 (4), December 2006, pages 567-584 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2006.00328.x/abstract>, accessed 01 January 2012)
- Fraser, J.W. (1999) *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America*. New York, St Martin's Griffin
- Greenawalt, K. (2005) *Does God Belong in Public Schools?* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Greene, Mark (2010) *The Great Divide*. London, LICC.
- Hudson, Neil (2012) *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole-Life Disciples*. Nottingham, IVP.

- Iremonger, Frederick A. (1948) *William Temple: Archbishop of Canterbury*. London, Oxford University Press.
- Kinnaman, David (2011) *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... And Rethinking Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books.
- Kirk, J.R. Daniel (2012) *Jesus I Have Loved, But Paul? A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.
- Moberly, Walter (1949) *The Crisis in the University*, London: SCM Press.
- Nagel, Thomas (2012) *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*. New York, OUP.
- NatCen Social Research (2011), *British Social Attitudes 28*. London, National Centre for Social Research.
- Newbiggin, Lesslie (1989) *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. London, SPCK.
- Nord, W.A. (1995) *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Norman, Edward (2002) *Secularisation: Sacred Values in a Secular World*. London, Continuum.
- Plantinga, Alvin (2011) *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. Oxford, OUP.
- Sandsmark, Signe, 2000, *Is World View Neutral Education Possible and Desirable?: A Christian Response to Liberal arguments*, Carlisle, Paternoster.
- Sommerville, C. John (2006) *The Decline of the Secular University*, Oxford, OUP.
- Stott, John (1975) *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Eastbourne, Kingsway.
- Trigg, Roger (2012) *Equality, Freedom and Religion*. Oxford, OUP.
- Voas, David (2005) Religious Decline in the UK: Blame Parents Not the Churches. *The Edge*, Issue 10, June 2005, page 20  
([http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/images/The%20Edge%2019\\_tcm8-8226.pdf](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/images/The%20Edge%2019_tcm8-8226.pdf), accessed 01 January 2012).
- Voas, David, and Crockett, Alasdair, Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging, *Sociology*, 39 (1), February 2005, pages 11-28.
- Walsh, Brian J. (1992) *Subversive Christianity: Imaging God in a Dangerous Time*. Bristol, Regius Press.

## Part B Curriculum – Course Core Themes

From my experience to date I would argue that there are six core themes that should run through any programme of Christian education and training. It should be noted, however, that whilst these themes can be conceptually distinguished, I would strongly contend that they cannot be separated – aware or unawares, adequately or inadequately, they, or non-Christian or secular replacements, are always intertwined in our thinking and practice.

In the sections below there are numerous recommendations from the literature. These recommendations are not commendations of everything they contain or argue for, but that these sources provide valuable input to the conversation. They should all be read critically, i.e. with worldview antennae (see section 3 below) raised, tuned and active!

1	Experiential Learning	Page 9
2	The Christian Story	Page 10
3	Worldviews	Page 16
4	Professionalism	Page 19
5	Spiritual Formation	Page 21
6	Practical Guidance on Christian Witness and Apologetics	Page 22

### 1. Experiential Learning (*aka* Action Reflection Learning *etc.*)

My working assumption is that the overall goal of Christian education and training should be the development and sustenance of Christian, life-long, whole-of-everyday-life, disciple-making culture and community. Furthermore I assume that this is of critical importance for effective (non-embarrassing) evangelism and mission. Given that assumption, the nurture of critically reflective practitioners is paramount. For that to happen our students must be given the necessary tools and trained in their use.

#### 1.1 Recommended Texts for Students

- Ballard Paul H. and Pritchard John (2006) *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, SPCK.
- Brookfield, Stephen D. (1987) *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*. Milton Keynes, Open University Press (and San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass)
- Craig, Yvonne Joan (1994) *Learning for Life: A Handbook of Adult Religious Education*. London, Continuum.
- Craig, Yvonne Joan (ed.) (1997) *Changes and Challenges in Later Life: Learning from Experience*. London, Third Age Press.
- Green, Laurie (2009) *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, Mowbray (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1990).
- Nash, Sally and Nash, Paul (2009), *Tools for Reflective Ministry*, London, SPCK.
- Thompson, Judith, with Pattison, Stephen and Thompson, Ross (2008) *SCM Study Guide to Theological Reflection*. London, SCM Press.

## 1.2 Background Reading

- Bevans, Stephen B. & Schroeder, Roger P. (2004) *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books.
- Bevans, Stephen B. & Schroeder, Roger P. (2011) *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books.
- Bevans, Stephen B. & Tahaafe-Williams, Katalina (eds) (2011) *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century*. Pickwick Publications.
- Graham, Elaine L., Walton, Heather & Ward, Frances (2005) *Theological Reflection: Methods*. London, SCM Press.
- Graham, Elaine L., Walton, Heather & Ward, Frances (2007) *Theological Reflection: Sources*. London, SCM Press.
- Schon, Donald A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass (Wiley).
- Vella, Jane (2008) *On Teaching and Learning: Putting the Principles and Practices of Dialogue Education into Action*, San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass (Wiley).  
For a valuable, critical review by Dr John Shortt in *The Theological Educator* (14 October 2011) go to <http://thetheologicaleducator.net/2011/10/14/considering-%e2%80%99dialogue-education%e2%80%99-in-a-christian-faith-context/#more-431>, accessed 30 June 2012.
- Vella, Jane, Berardinelli, Paula & Burrow, Jim (1998), *How Do They Know They Know: Evaluating Adult Learning*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (Wiley).
- Warren, Karen, Sakofs, Mitchell, & Hunt, Jasper S. Jr (eds) (1995) *The Theory of Experiential Education: A Collection of Articles Addressing the Historical, Philosophical, Social, and Psychological Foundations of Experiential Education*. Dubuque, IO, Kendall/Hunt. See, especially Joplin, Laura, "On Defining Experiential Education", pages 15-22.

## 2 The Christian Story (knowing and understanding the Bible and Christian history)

Christian reflection doesn't just happen, even when we have been given good tools and trained in their use. The expectations that bound and limit our reflections, opening some paths, but closing others, are usually formed by the secularising influence of peers, media and education. To discipline, open and enrich our expectations, we need to marinate in Christian tellings of the Bible story and of Christian history, and in Christian worldview formulations consistent with those tellings.

The broader point here is that no programme of education can be truly effective and fruitful unless there is a framework of interpretation that gives it all meaning – that makes liveable sense of all the different aspects and relationships of everyday life. Without a context of meaningfulness, education is doomed to be grotesquely inefficient – indeed a failure for all too many students (*cf.* MacIntyre, 1987).

MacIntyre, Alasdair (1987) "The Idea of an Educated Public". In Haydon, Graham (ed) *Education and Values: The Richard Peters Lectures Delivered at the*

*Institute of Education, University of London, Spring Term, 1985, chapter 1, pp. 15-36*

## 2.1 Introduction

A central aspect of effective Christian education is the linking together of four key stories:

- (1) a Christian telling of the Bible story,
- (2) a Christian telling of Christian history since the New Testament era,
- (3) a Christian telling of the Christian history of our country, society, and community,
- (4) a Christian telling of own life story.

In our work, we may utilise many different structures and ways of entry (see, e.g., section 6), but a prime aim should always be to make these connections. In other words, we must help our friends, colleagues and contacts to locate themselves in a Biblically and personally meaningful world. Of course we need to do so for ourselves first!

Several Christian writers have provided a suitable framework for (1) and (2), e.g. Tom Wright (1992: ch 5.3; see also Thiessen 1997: 171-173), who presents the Christian story as a 'Drama' with six 'Acts'. The first four Acts tell the Bible story, Act 5 tells the story of Christian history and Act 6 is the story of God's new creation.

Wright, N.T. (Tom) (1992) *The New Testament and the People of God*. London, SPCK, ch 5.3 'Theology, Narrative and Authority,' pages 139-143

## 2.2 The Bible Story

### 2.2.1 Interpreting Scripture

I have been reflecting on MacIntyre's assessment of modern Western education for over twenty years and remain convinced that his analysis is fundamentally correct. He argues that communities, which are able to create a rich culture and support effective (fruitful) education, are fundamentally moral communities where there is:

- (1) a large degree of shared beliefs and attitudes – in my terminology, a common worldview with shared answers to the big questions of life and meaning,
- (2) common source texts which are widely read and taken seriously,
- (3) a shared tradition of interpretation and understanding.

He argues that this demands a dominant philosophy (worldview) and a widespread philosophical education (1987:22), *ie*, in my terms, *an education that nurtures worldview awareness, analysis and critique*.

A Christian's primary source text is the Bible, but that immediately underlines the necessity of MacIntyre's third requirement: a shared tradition of interpretation and understanding.

In recent times the debates in Christian circles have often been between 'modern' and 'post-modern' approaches to Biblical interpretation. Modernity, developing out of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and reacting to the 'Wars of Religion', sought to establish a universal and objective, rational foundation for the edifice of human knowledge. This has appealed strongly to many generations of Christians, who, whilst arguing for the addition of special revelation, have nevertheless concluded that there is sufficient evidence to make Christian belief rationally credible, and establish the true interpretation of Scripture. Interpretation is a simple matter of getting it right or getting it wrong! The fear is that without such an objective foundation (or, alternatively, Spirit-sourced intuition), we would face an anarchy of opinions, an 'anything goes' field of competing interpretations.

Yet, as finite and fallen creatures, we cannot escape the realm of interpretation. We always come to the text from a particular culture and tradition, with a particular language, perspective, and presuppositions. There are always several or many interpretations to consider. But the options are always constrained; it is never true that 'anything goes' and none of the postmodern gurus have made such a claim. The Bible itself gives us different perspectives – Kings and Chronicles regarding the history of Judah and Israel; Mathew, Mark, Luke and John regarding the life of Jesus – and we need them all to gain a fuller picture and to chase away the pride that tempts us to claim that we have got it all – and got it all irrevocably right.

We also do well to heed C.S Lewis' recommendation (Lewis, 1944) that we read the books from earlier times (and, I would add, from other places and cultures) to help us recognise and counter the peculiar mistakes and blindness of our own age.

For an anthology of different perspectives see:

Phillips, Timothy R. & Okholm, Dennis L. (eds) (1995) *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*. Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press.

Phillips, Timothy R. & Okholm, Dennis L. (eds) (2009) *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation*. Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press.

### **2.2.2 Books on the Philosophical Background**

Clouser, Roy (2005) *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1991).

Clouser, Roy (2007) *Knowing with the Heart: Religious Experience and Belief in God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eugene OR, Wipf and Stock (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Downers Grove IL, IVP, 1999)

Lewis, C.S. (1944) 'Introduction' to St Athanasius' *The Incarnation of the Word of God*, London: Geoffrey Bles (Centenary Press), republished as "On the Reading of Old Books" in C.S. Lewis (1970) *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (ed. Walter Hooper), Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, pages 200-207

Phillips & Okholm (1995) – see above.

Phillips & Okholm (2009) – see above.

Smith, James K.A. (2006) *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

Smith, James K.A. (2012) *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

Vanhoozer, Kevin (2004) *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press.

Westphal, Merold (2009) *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

### 2.2.3 General Books on Reading the Bible

Billings, J. Todd (2010) *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans.

Briggs, Richard (2003) *Reading the Bible Wisely*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

Burridge, Richard (2005) *Four Gospels, One Jesus?: A Symbolic Reading*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, SPCK

Fee, Gordon & Stuart, Douglas (2003) *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan.

Peterson, Eugene H. (2006) *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. London, Hodder & Stoughton

Strom, Mark (1990) *The Symphony of Scripture: Making Sense of the Bible's Many Themes*. Downers Grove, IL, IVP (Phillipsburg, NJ, P&R Publishing, 2001)

### 2.2.4 Understanding the Bible Story

The sheer quantity and variety of the Biblical material forces upon us the need for means of integrating and organizing that material, so that the applications we bring to our lives today are legitimate and valid. That still leaves many different ways of grasping the Bible story whole. Christopher Ash (see below) explains this using the analogy of camera angles:

"Incidentally, this camera angle is not necessarily any better or worse than other camera angles. People sometimes ask how we can know whether a particular Bible overview is 'the right one'. The answer is: they all are and none of them is, though some are more valuable than others. Imagine a photographer taking a photograph of a great sculpture for an illustrated book. No camera angle would be wrong, but some might show off the sculpture better than others. The test is whether or not a photo gives readers a good two-dimensional 'feel' for the majesty of the three-dimensional statue." (2010: xv)

Others (e.g. Strom above) have used the analogy of an orchestral symphony.

All overview themes have their strengths and weaknesses; all present opportunities to enlarge our understanding and threats to restrict it. We need them all.

See Vanhoozer (2005) for an extensive theological and philosophical defence of this position.

Christian tellings of the Bible story will usually bear witness to the centrality of Jesus Christ and the call to enter into the Spirit's work of conforming the people of God to the way and image of Christ (see Billings, 2010, especially ch 5). However that still leaves open a range of ways to tell the story.

Of course, there will be considerable overlap between these tellings and even, in some cases, debate as to which heading they really belong under!

### **(1) Using the Theme of the Kingdom of God to Set Out the Story**

Bartholomew, Craig & Goheen, Michael (2006) *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. London, SPCK.

Goldsworthy, Graeme (1991) *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press.

Goldsworthy, Graeme (2000) *The Goldsworthy Trilogy*. Milton Keynes, Paternoster Press (Authentic Media). Contains *Gospel and Kingdom* (Paternoster, 1981), *The Gospel in Revelation* (Paternoster, 1984) and *Gospel and Wisdom* (Paternoster, 1987).

Roberts, Vaughan (2009) *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*. Nottingham, IVP.

Wright, N.T. (Tom) (1992) *The New Testament and the People of God*. London, SPCK.

Wright, Tom (2007) *Surprised by Hope*. London, SPCK

Wright, Tom (2012) *How God Became King: Getting to the Heart of the Gospels*. London, SPCK.

### **(2) Using the Theme of the Covenants that God makes with Creation and His People**

Dumbrell, William J. (1984) *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*. Exeter, Paternoster Press (Reprinted Carlisle, Paternoster 1997; Wipf & Stock, 2009).

### **(3) Using Basic Christian Doctrine to Tell the Story**

Fackre, Gabriel (1996) *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine*, Volume 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans (1<sup>st</sup> ed, 1978; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1984).

Vanhoozer, Kevin (2004) *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press.

### **(4) Using the Theme of God's Mission (*missio Dei*) to Tell the Story**

Goheen, Michael W. (2011) *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (2006) *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (2010) *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan.

### **(5) Using the Nexus of God, Place and Humanity to Tell the Story**

Christopher Wright envisages the pattern of primary relationships found in the Bible as a triangle formed by the interrelationships between God, humanity and the Earth. These provide corresponding theological, social and economic understandings. Through Biblical history the particular relationships change from God-humanity-Eden to God-fallen humanity-cursed earth, to God-Israel-Promised Land, to God-Church-*Koinonia*, to, finally, God-redeemed humanity-new creation. Craig Bartholomew has the triangle of God, Place and humanity, with the focus on place and a story structure of implacement — displacement — (re)impacement.

Bartholomew, Craig (2011) *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (1983) *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics*. Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (1990) *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament*. Exeter, Paternoster Press.

Wright, Christopher J.H. (1995) *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament*. Leicester, APOLLOS (Inter-Varsity Press).

### **(6) Using the Theme of the Gathering and Scattering of God's People**

Ash, Christopher (2010) *Remaking a Broken World: The Heart of the Bible Story*. Milton Keynes, Authentic Media.

### **(7) Using the Theme of Living a Vibrant and Dynamic Life with God**

Foster, Richard J. with Helmers, Kathryn A. (2008) *Life with God: A Life-Transforming Approach to Bible Reading*. London, Hodder & Stoughton (2009).

Peterson, Eugene H. (2006) *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. London, Hodder & Stoughton

This theme connects with **5 Spiritual Formation** below. Foster can be recommended to students as a companion to daily Bible reading.

There are doubtless many other ways of seeing the Bible whole; these are just some tasters to help and encourage students to marinate in Scripture.

## **2.3 Christian History**

A Christian telling of history since the NT era (an expansion of Act 5 of Tom Wright's telling of the Christian story) can also be done in many ways:

Several writers use the history of Christian mission as their organising factor. The British missiologist, Andrew Finlay Walls (1996), the American missiologist and Presbyterian missionary, Ralph Dana Winter (1924-2009) (1999), and the Catholic missiologists Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder (2004) provide good examples of this approach. Others (e.g. Noll, 1997) have identified decisive moments in history as another way of telling the story.

- Bevans, Stephen B. & Schroeder, Roger P. (2004) *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (esp. Part II, pages 73-280). Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books.
- Noll, Mark A. (1997) *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press.
- Walls, Andrew F. (1996) *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books.
- Winter, Ralph (1999) *The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History* (<http://www.hc.edu/files/Faculty/Craig%20Shaw/Kingdom%20Strikes%20Back%20word%20Doc.pdf>, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> April 2011)

Another approach is to trace the dominant pagan religious ideas that have repeatedly subverted the Christian Story. Dooyeweerd (1959) and Walsh & Middleton (1984: chs 6-9) follow this path.

- Dooyeweerd, Herman (1979) *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options*, trans John Kraay. Toronto, Wedge Publishing Foundation (Published in Dutch, Zutphen, J B van den Brink, 1959)
- Walsh, Brian J. & Middleton, J. Richard (1984) *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View*. Downers Grove, IL, IVP.

### 3 Worldviews (worldview awareness, analysis and critique)

#### 3.1 Introduction

Worldviews describe a person's or community's faith or religion. They are primarily a matter of the heart – of spiritual orientation; they are not, in the first place, academic or intellectual. They are common to everyone (not just those regarded as 'religious'). Without one we cannot think or act at all. Worldviews are like spectacles behind our eyes – we look (at the world) *through* them, not *at* the spectacles. Importantly, our worldview is not a matter of what we say we believe – and maybe not even what we think we believe! Our worldview is revealed in how we actually live and in how our society actually functions.

In our society today, most people go through education without ever considering (or even being asked to consider) the relationship between faith and life. Consequently most people do not even know that they have a worldview – they have simply absorbed theirs unawares from their environment – from family, peers, teachers, media *etc.* Unsurprisingly, therefore, many (most?) Christians absorb secular perspectives and most Churches provide no tools for discernment. Of course, if we cannot identify and articulate the dominant secular worldviews – and if we cannot explain how they measure up against a Christian worldview – then can we really claim to be educated at all?

A worldview acts as a systematic shorthand representation, or reminder, of the communal story, *but it is not the story itself*. It simply sets out the basic worldview categories (or basic assumptions) of the story, e.g. the Creation, Fall, Redemption categories of a Christian worldview. These are the categories we use (or ought to use) for everyday understanding.

Can we – as Christians – really claim to be educated,

- if we cannot identify and articulate the dominant secular worldviews?
- if we cannot explain how they measure up against a Christian worldview?

Those categories will be filled out by the Biblical story and, in that regard, particular tellings of the story (section **2.2.4**) will be particularly significant or insightful for particular areas of application. For example, the God-place-humanity nexus (section **2.2.4 (5)**) may be particularly insightful for applications in sociology and economics (see the works of Christopher Wright cited above – sections **2.2.4 (4)** and **(5)**)

### **3.2 Identifying the Worldviews at Work**

Worldviews operate in life and society by giving us the answers to the big questions:

- (1) What is ultimate reality? (what is really real? is there a God?)
- (2) Where are we? (what is this world we are in?),
- (3) Who are we? (what are human beings?),
- (4) What are we here for? (what is the human task/role?)
- (5) What's wrong? (why is there evil, hardship, suffering, oppression?),
- (6) What's the remedy? (what can be done to put matters right?),
- (7) Where are we going? (what happens after death?)
- (8) What time is it? (where are we at in the story? where do we belong in it?)
- (9) How do we know? (how do we know what is true?)

Of course other questions could be asked, and these questions could be phrased differently (even using the singular 'I', instead of the 'we' I have used, makes a significant difference!). Different questions will be key for different people at different times and in different contexts. Consider, for example, this passage by Dallas Willard:

Jesus answers the four great questions of life: What is real? (God and His Kingdom.) Who is well off or "blessed"? (Anyone alive in the Kingdom of God.) Who is a genuinely good person? (Anyone possessed and permeated with agape, God's kind of love.) And how can I become a genuinely good person? (By being a faithful apprentice of Jesus in Kingdom living, learning from him how to live my life as he would live my life as he would live my life if he were I.)

These are the questions that every human being must answer, because of the very nature of life, and that every great teacher must address. (Willard, 2006: 219-220)

As most people are unaware of their worldviews, it is usually no good asking people these questions as they stand. Rather we need to ask them about (or, better still, observe) the concomitant behaviours. If their worldview is X, then how would they behave and act? What kind of lifestyle should we observe? It is all too common for people to profess one worldview when challenged, but actually confess another through their practice.

### 3.3 Recommended Texts for Students

- Goheen, Michael W. & Bartholomew, Craig (2008) *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*. London, SPCK.
- Sire, James (2009) *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Nottingham: IVP
- Sire, James (2004) *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, Nottingham, IVP
- Sire, James (2006) *Why Good Arguments Often Fail*, Nottingham, IVP
- Walsh, Brian & Middleton, Richard (1984) *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View*, Downers Grove, IL, IVP
- Wolters, Albert M. and Goheen, Michael W. (2005) *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans (1<sup>st</sup> ed. Wolters 1985).

### 3.2 Background Reading

- Bertrand, J. Mark (2007) *(Re)Thinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live and Speak in This World*, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books
- Bonzo, J. Matthew & Stevens, Michael (eds) (2009) *After Worldview: Christian Higher Education in Postmodern Worlds*. Sioux Center, Iowa, Dordt College Press
- Naugle, David (2002) *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans
- Smith, James K.A. (2009) *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic.
- Smith, James K.A (2011) "Worldview, Sphere Sovereignty, and Desiring the Kingdom: A Guide for (Perplexed) Reformed Folk" *Pro Rege* 39 (4), June 2011, pages 15-24 (*Pro Rege* is a quarterly faculty publication of Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, USA)
- Willard, Dallas (2006) *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. Oxford, Monarch Books.

To see worldview brilliantly exploited as a theological tool, see:

- Wright, N.T. (Tom) (1992) *The New Testament and the People of God*, London, SPCK
- Wright, N.T. (Tom) (1996) *Jesus and the Victory of God*, London, SPCK
- Walsh, B. & Keesmaat, S. (2004) *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, Downers Grove, IL, IVP

### 3.3 Greater Philosophical Depth

If we want to be serious about the integration of faith and learning, then we need more than the simple categories of a Christian worldview; we need a Christian

philosophy. Otherwise we will inevitably utilise the philosophical conceptions current in contemporary society, which broadly means a choice between varieties of naturalism or postmodernism – the quarrelling twins of humanism. Both are toxic to Christian spiritual and academic health. Of course we can, and should, learn from them (see 2.2.2 above) but those who are practicing in a specific academic discipline need to develop and work from a distinctively Christian philosophical position. Actually Christian philosophical awareness will be valuable for many others outside of academia.

The best introduction is:

Clouser, Roy (2005) *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

For even greater depth and thoroughness in Christian Philosophy there is:

Strauss, D.F.M. (2009) *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Paideia Press

## 4 Professionalism (what it means to practice professionally as a Christian)

### 4.1 Introduction

A major conclusion from the discussion in **Part A** is that effective Christian practice requires a distinctively Christian communal and cultural context. However the two key terms here – *community* and *culture* – are especially slippery. As regards ‘community’ George Hillery (1955) surveyed 94 definitions and noted the absence of agreement beyond the fact that communities involve people! And as regards ‘culture’ Raymond Williams (1983:87) noted that it is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” Both words have come to mean almost anything. For Christian practice we need Christian understandings which can furnish the depth and scope that is needed for productive reflection on professional practice.

Hillery, George (1955) ‘Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement’ *Rural Sociology*, vol. 20 (2), pages 111-123.

Williams, Raymond (1983) *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, Fontana (1988; first ed., Fontana, 1976)

### 4.2 Community and Practice

In section 2.2.1 above I recommended MacIntyre’s assessment of modern Western education. His *After Virtue* (1981) contains an analysis of community life in terms of *practices*, *external* and *internal goods* and the *virtues*, which gives a depth and richness to our understanding of ‘community’ that is lacking in so much Christian discussion.

However there are two major drawbacks to MacIntyre’s presentation. First, MacIntyre is a philosopher and his book is heavy reading. We need a simpler introduction for Christians untrained in philosophy. Second, MacIntyre wrote the

book before he had fully returned to Christianity and so his positive contribution has an Aristotelian rather than a Christian/Biblical cast. Thankfully there is now a range of excellent resources that explain and build on MacIntyre's work and work it out in such a way that it illuminates every area of Christian professional practice.

- Hegeman, Johan, Edgell, Margaret and Jochemsen, Henk (2011) *Practice and Profile: Christian Formation for Vocation*, Eugene, OR, Wipf & Stock.
- Bass, Dorothy C. ed. (2010) *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass (John Wiley & Sons).
- Bass, Dorothy C. & Briehl, Susan R. eds (2010) *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life*. Nashville, Tennessee, Upper Room Books.
- De Muynck, Bram, Hegeman, Johan & Vos, Pieter (eds) (2011) *Bridging the Gap: Connecting Christian Faith and Professional Practice*. Sioux Centre, Iowa, Dordt College Press.
- Dykstra, Craig R. (2005) *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1999).
- Kettle, David J. (2011) *Western Culture in Gospel Context: Towards the Conversion of the West – Theological Bearings for Mission and Spirituality*. Eugene, OR, Cascade Books (Wipf & Stock)
- MacIntyre, Alasdair (2007) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London, Duckworth.
- Murphy, Nancey, Kallenberg, Brad J. & Nation, Mark Thiessen eds (1997) *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After MacIntyre*. Harrisburg, PA, Trinity Press International (reprinted Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).
- Smith, David I. & Smith, James K.A. eds (2011) *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans.
- Volf, Miroslav & Bass, Dorothy C. eds (2002) *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans.
- Wilson, Jonathan R. (2010) *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: From After Virtue to a New Monasticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eugene, OR, Cascade Books (Wipf and Stock) (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Harrisburg, PA, Trinity Press International, 1997)

### Other Useful Background Reading

- Alford, Helen J. & Naughton, Michael J. (2001) *Managing as if Faith Mattered: Christian Social Principles in the Modern Organization*. Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, CUP (French ed. 1972).
- Hardy, Lee (1990) *The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans.
- Milbank, John (1990) *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Pattison, Stephen (1997) *The Faith of the Managers: When Management Becomes Religion*. London, Cassell.
- Roberts, Richard H. (2002) *Religion, Theology and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: CUP

Wenger, Etienne (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

### 4.3 Culture

The sociologist Peter Berger (e.g. Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1973) and the Catholic cultural anthropologist Gerald Arbuckle (1988 onwards) have provided some stimulating analysis of culture, which I have found particularly helpful when reflecting on Christian education and mission. Doubtless there are many other authors that I don't know, who are equally helpful!

- Arbuckle, Gerald (1988) *Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations*. London, Geoffrey Chapman.
- Arbuckle, Gerald (1990) *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers*. London, Geoffrey Chapman.
- Arbuckle, Gerald (1993) *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership*. London, Geoffrey Chapman.
- Arbuckle, Gerald (1996) *From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation*. London, Geoffrey Chapman.
- Arbuckle, Gerald (2008) *Laughing with God: Humor, Culture and Transformation*. Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press.
- Arbuckle, Gerald (2010) *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique*. Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press.
- Berger, Peter, Berger, Brigitte & Kellner, Hansfried (1973) *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*. New York, Random House (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974).

## 5 Spiritual Formation (nurturing our personal and corporate life of faith)

### 5.1 Introduction

Following Jesus Christ in professional life is not something that happens by our own power, but only through the Holy Spirit who initiates our discipleship and empowers us to live in gratitude to the Father.

- Billings, J. Todd (2010) *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans.
- Ford, David F. (2007) *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Foster, Richard (2005) *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bath, Eagle Publishing
- Hay, David (2006) *Something There: The Biology of the Human Spirit*. London, Darton, Longman and Todd.
- Hay, David (2007) *Why Spirituality is Difficult for Westerners*. Exeter, Societas Imprint Academic.
- Hunter, James Davison (2000) *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil*. New York, Basic Books.
- Jones, Cheslyn, Wainwright, Geoffrey and Yarnold, Edward, eds (1986) *The Study of Spirituality*. London: SPCK.

- Packer, James I. (1991) *Among God's Giants: Aspects of Puritan Christianity*. Eastbourne, Kingsway.
- Peterson, Eugene H. (2006) *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. London, Hodder & Stoughton.
- Pierik, Derk (1987) *Being Near to God: The Meaning of Spirituality*. Toronto, Institute for Christian Studies.
- Smith, David (2009) "On Viewing Learners as Spiritual Beings: Implications for Language Educators" *CELEA News*, 1 (1), February 2009, pages 5-11.
- Smith, James Bryan & Graybeal, Lynda (2010) *Life Streams: A Lyfe Resource for Spiritual Growth*. Swindon, Bible Society.
- Wells, David F. (1998) *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans.
- Willard, Dallas (2002) *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. IVP.
- Willard, Dallas (2006) *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. Oxford, Monarch Books (Lion Hudson).
- Wright, Tom (2010) *Virtue Reborn*. London, SPCK.

## **(6) Practical Guidance on Christian Witness and Apologetics**

This last core module is about Christian witness and apologetics. We live in a world that commonly regards Christianity as an ancient superstition, which is unbelievable in our secular, postmodern world – even as the cause of all that is wrong or unacceptable today (as in John Lennon's *Imagine*). How, then, can we seriously engage with people? How can we introduce Christian perspectives and challenges without people ridiculing, 'switching off' or 'missing the point.' The aim of this module is to explore this crucial element of Christian practice and commend the telling of inspiring and challenging stories and the asking of subversive questions. The purpose of this telling of stories and asking of questions is to expose and critique the dominant secular worldviews (which are arguably much more vulnerable to critical erosion than Christianity) and open the way for a judicious appreciation of a Christian worldview.

- Barrs, Jerram (2009) *Learning Evangelism from Jesus*. Wheaton, IL, Crossway Books.
- Carter, Joe & Coleman, John (2009) *How to Argue Like Jesus: Learning Persuasion from History's Greatest Communicator*. Wheaton, IL, Crossway.
- Currin, Jim (2011) *The 360 Gospel of Jesus: Every Angle for Every Person*. Cambridge, Grove Books.
- Currin, Jim (2011) *Sharing Faith the Jesus Way*. Abingdon, The Bible Reading Fellowship.
- Gempf, Conrad (2003) *Jesus Asked: What He Wanted to Know*, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan.
- Willard, Dallas (2006) *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. Oxford, Monarch Books. Esp ch 15 *Jesus the Logician*, pages 180-195

For examples of stories and questions see the Reality Bites website:  
[www.realitybites.org.uk](http://www.realitybites.org.uk)

---

There are many areas of practical skill that should also be part of a common core of education and training:

**Leadership skills:** leader = servant, leading a team, leading a project, leading education, training and development, leading in times of change and transition, leading in pioneer and marginal situations, assessment of teaching and learning, keeping the vision alive, inspiring and motivating staff, securing continuous development. These skills also apply, e.g. to teachers with their classes and students with their peers. There is also the responsibility of Christian institutions (e.g. Christian schools and colleges) to interact with local society to share, explain, and work for the common good.

**Management skills:** managing a team, managing resources, managing external relationships (and observing proper boundaries), managing finances, health and safety, safeguarding, quality assurance. As regards, e.g. teachers, these skills will apply to classroom management, discipline, developing teaching aids, assessment methods, lesson planning, mixed ability teaching, identification and support of children with special needs, etc.

### **Communication skills**

**Business skills**, entrepreneurial skills.

Many of these are considered in the literature cited in section 4, especially in terms of Christian, rather than secular perspectives. It must be emphasised that the terms used above do not have worldview-neutral meanings and as Christians we must be careful not to embrace the dominant secular understandings unawares.

For further Christian resources for a range of academic subjects and areas of life contact Richard Russell's *Christian Studies Unit* (<http://www.christianstudiesunit.org.uk/>) and Steve Bishop's *All of Life Redeemed* website (<http://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/>).

It only remains to emphasise the point made at the beginning of **Part B** (see also section 5.1). The six themes we have considered are always intertwined in our thinking and practice. This applies especially to the fifth theme of spiritual formation. Following Jesus Christ in professional life is not something that happens by our own power, but only through the Holy Spirit who initiates our discipleship and empowers us to live in gratitude to the Father.

---

© Dr Arthur Jones, 14<sup>th</sup> draft, 18 February 2013 (13<sup>th</sup> draft, 27 November 2012, 12<sup>th</sup> draft, 28 October, 11<sup>th</sup> draft, 19 September, 10<sup>th</sup> draft, 05 September, 9<sup>th</sup> draft, 31 August, 8<sup>th</sup> draft, 27 August, 7<sup>th</sup> draft, 16 August, 6<sup>th</sup> draft 01 July, 5<sup>th</sup> draft 18 June, 4<sup>th</sup> draft, 29 May, 3<sup>rd</sup> draft, 02 May, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, 20 April, 1<sup>st</sup> draft, 18 March 2012)

---

## About the Author

**ARTHUR JONES** BSc, MEd, PhD, CBiol, MSB is Training Co-ordinator for the *Church Army's* mission based training programme ([www.churcharmy.org.uk](http://www.churcharmy.org.uk)) and Director, Teacher Training Programmes, for *TeachBeyond* (an international Christian organization providing transformational education to children and adults, [www.teachbeyond.org](http://www.teachbeyond.org)). He was the Development Manager and Senior Tutor for the *West Yorkshire School Of Christian Studies (WYSOCS)*, ([www.wysocs.org.uk](http://www.wysocs.org.uk)) from 2002 to 2009 and remains as a voluntary Associate of its *Reality Bites* ministry ([www.realitybites.org.uk](http://www.realitybites.org.uk)). From 2004 to 2011 he was a Trustee and Company Director of the *Association of Christian Teachers* ([www.christian-teachers.org.uk](http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk)) and Chair from 2007 to 2011. He was also the Course Leader for the *Stapleford Centre* postgraduate distance-learning course *Faith in Schools* ([www.e-stapleford.co.uk/](http://www.e-stapleford.co.uk/)) from 2005 to 2010. A teaching career spanning more than 30 years included ten years in India and Nepal, and the headship of a pioneering Christian school in Bristol.

His doctoral thesis (PhD, University of Birmingham, 1972) was an historical, philosophical and scientific analysis of models of origins, which examined the central role of metaphysical commitments in science, and thus also in science education.

His Masters dissertation (MEd, Bristol University, 1998) argued that the structural embodiment in a society of confessional pluralism is the only just and viable response to the presence of a diversity of ethnic and cultural groups. This allowed a new defence of alternative schools and curricula, but one that requires the (re-) establishment of alternative communities and cultures to provide the necessary contexts of meaning. The absence of a viable framework of meaning is identified as the critical problem with almost all modern programmes of education.

He is the author of *Science in Faith: A Christian Perspective on Teaching Science* (Romford, Christian Schools' Trust, 1999) and *No Home & Alone: A School Programme on Homelessness* (Bristol, Global Concern, 1999)

---

## Contact Info

Dr Arthur Jones  
Tel: +44 (0)1457 764331  
Email: [jyotijon@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:jyotijon@globalnet.co.uk)  
Skype: arthurjyotijon