

A CRITIQUE OF CHARLES KRAFTS USE/MISUSE OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND MISSIOLOGICAL FORMULATION

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is written with a single purpose of providing a critique by answering the question whether Dr. Charles Kraft has used/misused the communication and social sciences in his biblical interpretation and missiological formulation.

METHODOLOGY

The generous cooperation of Dr. Kraft of Fuller Theological Seminary, in the provision of an updated comprehensive listing (see Appendix I for a sample of selected titles) of his published works, is gratefully acknowledged. His commitment and contribution to academic scholarship, missiological formulation, interdisciplinary integration, etc. are much appreciated by many. In the last thirty some years, Dr. Kraft has written more than two dozen books (in areas ranging from linguistics, communication, missiology, to deliverance ministries, etc. with translations in Chinese, Korean, and German), and more than 120 articles, editorials and chapters in books.

From the list of Dr. Kraft's publications, it is obvious that there are three major foci traceable chronologically to his personal interest and professional development. From 1963-1973, he published seven volumes on Hausa, a Nigerian language. Beginning in article format in the early 1970s, his focus of research moved from linguistics/Bible translation to interdisciplinary integration of linguistics, hermeneutics, behavioral/social and communication sciences, etc., resulting in the publication of the influential and controversial book *Christianity in Culture* (1979a). (In the same year, two other books were published, *Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity* and *Communicating the Gospel God's Way*.) Since his exposure from 1982-1983 to demonology and deliverance ministries, by way of John Wimber's "Signs and Wonders" class at Fuller (Kraft 1987:122, 1989:6, 62) and his sub-sequent (or second, cf. Kraft 1979a:6-12 being his first) "paradigm shift" in 1984, his publications began to shift ("practice shift," 1987:127) towards that aspect of Christian ministries as marked by the publication of several titles of this nature: *Christianity with Power* (1989), *Defeating Dark Angels* (1992), *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing* and *Behind Enemy Lines* (both in 1994).

Of all the publications by Dr. Kraft, three books—i.e. *Christianity in Culture* (1979a), *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* (1983) and *Christianity with Power* (1989)—and

several articles (see Appendix I) will be included as the most relevant and representative of his use/misuse of the communication and social sciences in his biblical interpretation and missiological formulation.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Bible: The inspired truth of the sixty-six canonical books.

Biblical Hermeneutics: The principles and procedures by which the interpreter determines the meaning of the Holy Scripture within the proper contexts.

Culture: The context/consequence of patterned interaction of personal Beings/beings, in contrast to popular usage of culture applying to the presumed closed system of homo sapiens. This definition of culture can freely be applied or referred to angelic (fallen or good) beings of the angel-culture and the dynamic interaction of the Three Persons of the Triune God in theo-culture (Wan 1982b).

Ethno hermeneutics: The principles and procedures by which the interpreter determines the meaning of the Holy Scripture, inspired by the Primary Author (Triune God within theo-culture) and inscripturated through the secondary authors (human agents of varied historico-culturo-linguistic contexts of homino-culture) for the recipients (of varied historico-culturo linguistic contexts) (Wan 1994).

Inspiration: The divine way of revealing biblical truth (the Bible) to humankind.

Interpretation: The human way of reducing distance and removing difference to ascertain the meaning of the text at hand (Berkhof 1969:11).

Linguistic and Communication Sciences: Includes the study of descriptive linguistics, applied linguistics, proxemic and kinesic communication, etc.

Missiological Formulation: The formation and development of theory/methodology/strategy for the sake of mission (the divine Great Commission) and missions (the human ways and means to fulfill the mission).

Social sciences: Includes disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. and the term is used interchangeably with behavioral sciences in this study.

Scriptural: That which is taught by the Bible and is prescriptive, principal and transcultural / eternal in nature as compared to being “biblical” — that which is found in the Bible and is of descriptive, precedent and cultural / temporal in nature (Wan 1994).

KRAFT'S USE OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AS A CONTRIBUTION TO INTER-DISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION

With the advancement of modern scholarship comes the necessity of division of labor for the sake of specialization and the reality of the compartmentalization of knowledge and disciplines. In addition to the challenge of interdisciplinary integration, Christian scholars have to take up the challenge of integrating their Christian faith with their efforts of interdisciplinary integration without injuring the integrity of either Christian faith (dogmatics; cf. warnings by David Hubbard, Kraft 1977:170; and Robert McQuilkin, 1977), academic disciplines (academics) or practical application (pragmatics).

For decades, evangelical Christians, like Charles Kraft in *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1979a), have successfully strived for multi-disciplinary integration, covering a multitude of subject matters. Of those, like Kraft, who have received similar professional training and with similar ministry experiences, have tried to bridge similar disciplines and covering similar topics, there are many, e.g. Eugene Mida Kenneth Pike, Alan Tippett. William Wonderly, Linwood Barney, James O. Buswen, III, David Hesselgrave, Paul Hiebert, etc.

However, Kraft' s book (1979a) is unique in terms of the combination of the following characteristics: conceptually coherent/consistent with simplicity (some reviewers like Carl Henry and Edward Gross may disagree on this point; yet it can be demonstrated as shown in Figures I and 2 below), "well-documented and carefully organized" (Henry 1980:153), thought provoking (Adeney 1980:24), "creative...challenging. Impressive...admirable" (Saayman 1981:89 -90), innovative in theoretical formulation, illustrative in field experience, practical in illustrations, comprehensive in coverage, etc.

I have come a long way (cf. previous review, Wan 1982a) and it has been a long time in coming to have a greater appreciation of this volume: in the formats of pre-publication mimeograph and later in published book form (as key reference or textbook) for a period of about twenty years in teaching ministries, testing it out in three continents. Even this semester, I am using it as a text for my ethno-hermeneutics class in the doctoral class at the Reformed Theological Seminary. I share the assessment of reviewer Robert L. Ramseyer:

. . . a truly monumental attempt to show what cultural anthropology can do for our understanding of Christian faith and mission. As the most complete work in the field, *Christianity in Culture* is also the *best example* of the way in which our understanding of culture and the cultural process affects our understanding of Christian faith and life . . . especially helpful in this respect because the author is not afraid to *follow his anthropological presuppositions to their obvious theological and missiological conclusions*. Where his predecessors were content to merely suggest, Kraft spells out in detail the *logical conclusions of consistently* acting on his understanding of society and culture . . . I felt strongly that this was at the same time both *the best book and the worst book* that I had read on this subject. I still feel that way (Ramseyer 1983:110, 115) (*emphasis mine*).

It is in the spirit of appreciation, at the invitation of Dr. Kraft' s risk taking continuous searching, "open-minded development ... dynamic and growing ... you are free to disagree ... are encouraged to join me in the quest for greater insight" (Kraft 1979a:xiii.12, 41; 1987b:139), within the context of friendly and frank discussion ("genuine dialog," Kraft 1987b:139) that the following comments are offered.

FIGURE 1- THE BASICS OF KRAFTS (1979a) MODEL

CATEGORY	GENERAL PATTERN	KRAFTS PREFERRED PATTERN
LANGUAGE <i>(LINGUISTICS)</i>	sound, word, sentence, paragraph, etc. <i>-(phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc.)</i>	-variable in forms, (chapter) -efficient / impactful in function, -constant in meaning (4-7)
GOSPEL <i>(EVANGELISM)</i>	-the good news of salvation <i>-(multiple approaches: prepositional, personal, presence, persuasion, program, power-encounter, etc.)</i>	-meet the felt-need of receptor <i>-(various receptor-oriented means leading to the communication of the good news)</i> (8-12)
BIBLE <i>(TRANSLATION)</i>	-in different languages for different people-groups <i>-(formal-correspondence, dynamic-equivalence, etc.)</i>	-choice of receptor-oriented types of translation of the Bible <i>-(dynamic-equivalence principle)</i> (13-17)

NOTE: () chapter numbering of Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*. (1979a)

FIGURE 2- KRAFT' S INTERDISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION

SOURCE / CATEGORY	EUGENE NIDA (K. PIKE, etc.)			[NEO-ORTHODOXY and NEW HERMENEUTIC]			
DISCIPLINE	COMMUNICATION and SOCIAL SCIENCES			[PHILOSOPHICAL and PRACTICAL THEOLOGY]			
	linguistic and communication sciences		social/beh. sciences	[existential theology, Bible translation, hermeneutics]		[practical theology, missiology]	
	Transformational grammar; and functional linguistics	communication theory and Bible translation	functional-ism, conceptual model and Christian model(2,3)	[relational theology] (6)	[revelation and hermeneutics] (10-11)	evangelism	discipleship and church planting
BASIC IDEA	form, function, meaning (4,5)	three aspects: sender-message-receptor; communication with efficiency(8)	human commonality and world view (5)	In-carnation (9) ethno-theology (7)	[receptor-oriented understanding (12-13);ethno linguistic interpretation.(7)]	"be all...to all...by all means" (I Cor. 9) (cf.p.103,123, 128,142,154,197, 230,300,400)	[contextualization, transforming culture with God] (18,19)
KEY TERM	dynamic-equivalence (DE) / receptor-oriented (RO)						
	RO-principle / DE-principle	RO-communication and DE-translation	[DE-Transcultural-tion (14)]	[DE-theologizing (15)]	[RO-revelation (9) DE-translation of the inspired Casebook (13)]	IDE-conversion of (17) and DE-transculturalization of the message (14)]	DE-churchness (16)

NOTE: 1) () chapter numbering in *Christianity in Culture*. (Kraft 1979a); 2) concepts and terms in [] are logical derivations of Kraft's consistent/coherent theoretical model; leaning towards theological deviation on Kraft's part from the evangelical position as represented by "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" (Geisler 1978).

KRAFT'S USE / MISUSE OF THE COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND MISSIOLOGICAL FORMULATION

Evangelical response to Kraft's ethno theological model of integrating communication and social sciences with theology varied from positive (Buswell 1986, Saayman 1981), mixed (Adeney 1980, Conn 1984, Hesselgrave 1992) to negative (Carson 1987 and 1993, Dryness 1980, Gross 1985, Heldenbrand 1982 and 1985, Henry 1980, Krass 1979, McQuilkin 1977, Scaer 1982, Wan 1982a). Two books have been published in response to Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*, i.e. Edward N. Gross' *Is Charles Kraft An Evangelical? A Critique of Christianity in Culture* (1985) of 100-plus pages and Harvie M. Conn' *Eternal Word and Changing World* (1984) of 300-plus pages which was reviewed by Buswell (1986:71) who stated that "in many respects this work might be considered an extended . . . commentary on missionary anthropologist Charles Kraft's position developed mainly in his *Christianity in Culture*" (cf. Conn's own admission, 1984:330). Conn's review by far was the most fair and extensive appraisal of Kraft's model.

The following discussion is organized in the format of answers to four questions:

- 1) Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his attempt of interdisciplinary integration? -- NO.
- 2) Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his biblical interpretation and missiological formulation in light of his theoretical and methodological root being a linguist/communicologist? -- NO.
- 3) Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his biblical interpretation from an evangelical perspective:
 - based on "The Willowbank Report" ? -- NO
 - based on "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy"? -- YES
- 4) Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his missiological formulation from an evangelical perspective:
 - based on "The Willowbank Report"? -- NO
 - based on "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy"? -- YES

Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his attempt of interdisciplinary integration? -- NO.

Kraft had been repeatedly commended for his insightful discussion on linguistic application to Bible translation (Adeney 1980, Conn 1984, Saayman 1981, Hesselgrave 1992, Ramseyer 1983) yet his critics faulted him either for his bad choice of an anthropological theory called "functionalism" (Conn 1984, Ramseyer 1983, Scaer 1982, Wan 1982a) or his non-evangelical theology in terms of "truth," "revelation," and "hermeneutics" (Carson 1987 and 1993, Conn 1978, Dryness 1980, Gross 1985, Heldenbrand 1982 and 1985, Henry 1980, Krass 1979, McQuilkin 1977 and 1980, Ramseyer 1983, Wan 1982a).

A careful study of Kraft's published works will show that his critics have misunderstood him very badly. In his writings, especially *Christianity in Culture*, he appears to be an anthropologist of the "functional" school and a theologian of "neo-orthodox" and "new hermeneutic" persuasion. He uses freely the terms and concepts of anthropological functionalism (e.g. "culture is an integrated system," "form and function," "equilibrium," "felt-need," "functional substitute," "efficiency," "impact," etc.); yet he never claims to be a "functionalist anthropologist." He employs with liberty the terms and concepts of scholars of "neo-orthodox" and "new hermeneutic" tradition (e.g. "continuous revelatory interaction between God and man," "revelation as a receptor-oriented communication," "the Bible as a case book of God's continuous dynamic interaction with man," "inspiration is an ongoing dynamic process of God's communication," etc.); he never identifies himself as a theologian. He is a linguist / communicologist by self-profession (Kraft 1977:165; 1987:133; 1983) and by practice *par excellence*.

For instance, it is generally assumed by Kraft's theoretical friends (Buswell 1986, Conn 1984, Saayman 1981) and foes (Dyrness 1980, Helderbrand 1985, Ramseyer 1983, Wan 1982a) that his model of ethno-theology (Kraft 1979a) is based on his choice of functionalist anthropological theory (e.g. Conn 1984: chapter 3), traceable to the British (Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, etc.) and American (Franz Boas, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, etc.) traditions (cf. Buswell 1980, Hatch 1973, Harris 1968). This assumption of his personal choice of anthropological "functionalism" is not warranted by facts, i.e. his training, profession, publication and performance.

A diachronic analysis of the formation and development of Kraft's ethno-theological model began in linguistics / communication sciences (Wan 1982a) and remains consistently as a communication model (Dyrness 1980:40). He began as a linguist by training (linguistics at Hartford Seminary Foundation), by research and profession (as a Linguist / translator in the Hausa language of Nigeria), by publications (on Hausa: seven volumes between 1965-1973, thirteen articles between 1965-1976). Though not a member of the Summer Institute of Linguistics ("SIL" except in 1961-63, see Kraft 1987:133), he followed closely and "built upon" (Conn 1984:154-159) the foundation of SIL/ABS ("American Bible Society,") translators / linguists such as E. A. Nida, K. Pike, W. A. Smalley, W. D. Reyburn, J. A. Lowen, W. Wonderly, etc. (Conn 1984:154-159; Helderbrand 1985:42).

It was not until Kraft's realization that his linguistic techniques and mono-cultural missionary training did not prepare and equip him to deal with cultural issues and contextualization problems (e.g. polygamy, spirits, Nigerian preference of the Old Testament to his beloved "Epistle to the Romans," etc.), that he was led to move into applied anthropology in research, reflection, and publication (Kraft 1979a: chapter 1). His model of ethno-theology in *Christianity in Culture* is a cumulative combination of linguistics / communication research (e.g. S-M-R, emic/etic and surface / deep analysis, functional linguistic, transformational grammar, receptor-orientation and dynamic-equivalence translation / communication, etc.) applied to anthropology, theology, with a strong dose of American pragmatism (e.g. efficiency, impact, practical Throw-to," "functional fit," "felt-need," "receptor-orientation" for fruitful result, etc.). His ethno-theology has all the trappings of classical functionalism of European tradition, and modern

functionalism of contemporary American version in cultural anthropology. At heart he is a linguist / communicologist and is busy at work (Kraft 1976c, 1977a, 1978c, 1979b, 1981, 1983 etc., see Appendix I) with the preoccupation of being efficient and impactful pragmatically (Wan 1982a). His call for being “personal” and “relational” (Kraft 1979a, 1983) is for the purpose of “good communication for good result” (Kraft 1979b, 1979e), or “ensuring the best return on the missionary investment” (Saayman 1981:90), a rather pragmatic and programmatic motivation that is “biblical” like the recruitment pattern of the scribes and Pharisees of the biblical time (Mt 23:15); but not “scriptural” (i.e. in obedience to God and with compassion to and love for the recipients, Mt 9:35-38; 28:18-20; etc.)

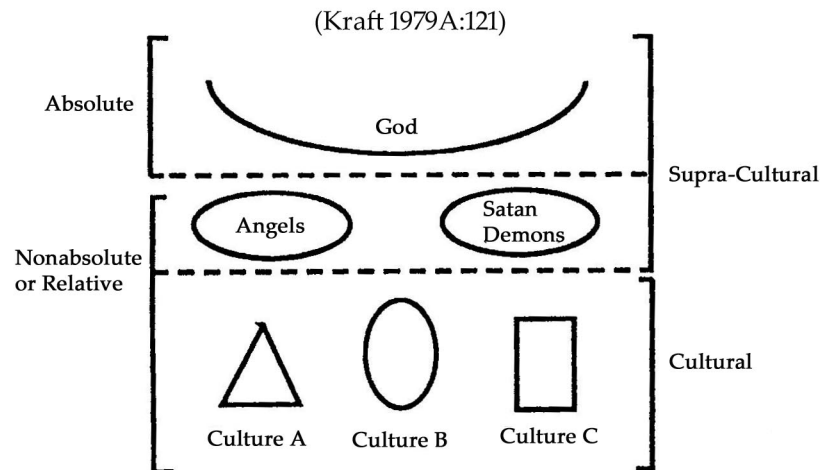
Kraft has achieved what he planned to do in *Christianity in Culture*, i.e. develop a “cross-cultural Christian theology” by integrating “anthropology, linguistics, translation theory, and communication science on areas of life and thought that have ordinarily been regarded as theological” (1979a:13). Credit is due him for his successful interdisciplinary integration with clarity, coherence, convincing presentation, etc. and for his momentous accomplishment in theoretical formulation (Ramseyer 1983:110). Even one of his strongest critics (100-plus pages of negative remarks) complemented him on this volume as “one of the most important books yet printed dealing with the current contextualization debate” (Gross 1985:3).

Kraft’s model has been criticized by reviewer Ramseyer who said, “*Christianity in Culture* seems strangely unaware of confrontations and conflict in New Testament gospel sharing” (1983:112-113) on the basis of Kraft’s “naive attempt to apply insight from one particular kind of cultural anthropology (static functionalism) to the Christian mission (1983:115). Providentially, Kraft in 1984 experienced a “second paradigm shift” (cf. Kraft 1979a:6-12 being his first) which gave him a “kingdom perspective” with a “warfare mentality” realizing the reality of the spirit world. His “practice shift” (Kraft 1987:127) moving into the Christian deliverance ministries is theologically supported by his research and publication of several books: *Christianity with Power* (1989), *Defeating Dark Angels* (1992), *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing* and *Behind Enemy Line* (both in 1994) and many articles.

Kraft began his research and writing in linguistics from 1963-1973, followed by his intensive study on and integration of anthropology, communication, translation, interpretation and contextualization in the 1970s with the resultant publication of *Christianity in Culture* in 1979. He then shifted his focus to the spirit world from the 1980s to the present. This pilgrimage of inter-disciplinary integration is similar to the wilderness experience of the Israelites due to his conception and compartmentalization of reality, especially spiritual reality.

Kraft took the “cultural / supracultural and absolute / relative” presupposition (epistemological discussion here and theological critique later) from Nida with neither reservation nor modification (with reference to Nida in his 1979a “a total of 41 times,” as observed by Conn, 1984:144). The weakness of Kraft’s interdisciplinary approach lies in this faulty presupposition of reality (see Figure 3) in his theoretical formulation and the resultant research / ministry operation that took him many years of time and efforts moving from the lower level (of functional linguistics) to the higher level (of “integrated culture,” incarnation, inscripturation, interpretation of Scripture, ethno-theology) to the middle level (of angels demons, deliverance ministries) as shown in the diagram below.

FIGURE 3 - THE CULTURAL, SUPRACULTURAL,
ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE



Perhaps this is the problem Ramseyer (1983: 114) is trying to identify which "is a characteristic of the Western intellectual tradition . . . but his is unable to see that his attempts to split reality into principles and behavior, meaning and form . . . are the sort of Western intellectualizing which he warns his readers against." The following quotation may illustrate this point of duality conception and its correlated compartmentalizing operation:

The **dialectical logic** of the Ameri-European culture can best be understood in light of lineal conception of time and monochronic time-management . . . The extensive use of the Aristotelian logic, especially the law of identity and the law of contradiction . . . leads to a deep-rooted **perception of duality in reality and dialectical cognitive process in operation, It is axiomatic to categorize and classify everything in AE culture in terms of duality:** e.g. ethically right or wrong, good or bad; cosmologically nature or culture, temporal or eternal, the city of God or city of man, heaven or hell; cultural or supracultural, absolute or relative; existentially compartmentalize life into public or private, profession or personal, departmentalize . . . soteriologically the sovereignty of God or the free will of man; christologically the divine nature or human nature in the person of Christ, the historical Jesus or Christ of the **kerygma** (Wan 1982b, 1985); epistemologically true or false; aesthetically beautiful or ugly, etc. The list of **duality** can be easily multiplied (Wan 1995:15).

In this study, a new definition and concept of "culture" is proposed as an alternative that would not presuppose humanity as a "closed system" (Wan 1982b), compartmentalized from angelic beings and the Divine Being (the Three Persons of the Triune God). This new model of reality will enable evangelical Christians to develop a "symphonic integration" that is multi-disciplinary (not just a "trialogue" of anthropology, missiology and theology as proposed by Conn 1984), multi-contextual (Wan 1982b, 1994), multi-dimensional (Holmes 1983), and multi-perspectival (Conn 1984:335-337, Poythress 1987). (See Appendix II—A *Symphonic Approach to Interdisciplinary Integration: A Vari-dynamic Model*. This "vari-dynamic model" is to be "Trinitarian" in theology and epistemology, "incarnational" in anthropology and methodology,

"contextual-interactionist" in contextualization, multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary in demonology and deliverance ministries, family-focused in the practice of evangelism, discipleship, church planting, ethno hermeneutically in theologizing which is biblically based, scripturally sound and culturally sensitive, see Wan 1982b, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1995).

Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his biblical interpretation and missiological formulation in light of his theoretical and methodological root being a linguist / communicologist? -- NO.

If one criticizes Kraft's ethno-theology from an anthropological perspective (as I did in 1982) one is overlooking his strength in consistent and creative, insightful and innovative interdisciplinary integration (see previous quote of Ramseyer, 1984). Attacking Kraft's view on "truth," "revelation," "interpretation," etc. as presented in *Christianity in Culture* theologically without considering his theoretical and methodological base in linguistic and communication sciences, as did many of his critics (e.g. Carson 1987 and 1993, Conn 1978, Dryness 1980, Gross 1985, Heldenbrand 1982 and 1985, Henry 1980, Krass 1979, McQuilkin 1977 and 1980, Ramseyer 1983, Wan 1982a) is indeed a real mistake. Kraft has neither the intention nor the pretension to declare himself a theologian (whether it be an "evangelical" one or not is beside the point). On one occasion he expressed his frustration at being misunderstood, "it is unlikely that a 'meddler' (of theology) like myself could function competently as a theologian" (Kraft 1977:166).

He, (by confession "academically I am labeled an anthropological linguist," Kraft 1977:165) is a linguist / communicologist / missiologist busying himself in his courageous venture into the hinterland of "cross-cultural theologizing" (sub-title of 1979a) *dynamically* (to be different from the traditional "static" approach, 1979a:32 -38), *open-mindedly* (to break away from the "closed-minded conservative," 1979a:39 -41), *cross-culturally* (to swim against the current of mono-cultural theologizing of the regular practice of western theologians, Kraft 1979a: chapter 7), *contextually* (to avoid the pitfall of the old-fashioned "cultural imperialist"), *progressively* (termed "cumulative revelation information" of the Bible rather than "progressive revelation" of the closed-minded evangelical, Kraft 1979a: chapters 9-12), *pragmatically* (for "efficiency" and "impact"), *communicatively* (see Figure 3). His strength in being theoretically consistent and coherent has misled him theologically. (see [] items on the right side of Figure 2).

Kraft is to be praised for his courage to go beyond his linguist / communicologist predecessors, Nida, Pike, Smalley, Wonderly, etc. (cf. quote of Ramseyer 1983 previously), embarking on his journey, of interdisciplinary integration of "cross-cultural theologizing" by way of communication (Kraft 1973d, 1974a, 1980, 1983), psychology (Kraft 1974b, 1986), anthropology (Kraft 1975, 1977, 1978b, 1980, 1985), theology (Kraft 1972a, 1972b, 1979a) and missiology (Kraft 1978a, 1978b). In *Christianity in Culture*, Kraft is charting a new path of multidisciplinary integration and in the process he might have controversially attracted criticism on his theology by the well intentioned "defenders" of the evangelical faith in the persons of Harvey Conn (1978), William Dryness (1980), Edward Gross (1985), Carl Henry (1980), Richard Heldenbrand (1982 and 1985), and Robertson McQuilkin (1977 and 1980). Only a linguist / communicologist would be eager to develop a new "theology of communication" and

make ‘biblical’ but not ‘scriptural’ statements as listed in Figure 4.

Kraft’s best contribution to interdisciplinary integration is his insightful analysis of language, translation, communication and his masterful synthetic model of communication. Even his critics complement him: “[Kraft] has produced a book which contains a wealth of extremely helpful ideas and suggestions. He is at his best when he discusses language. Chapter 13 on the translation of the Bible is excellent” (Ramseyer 1983:115).

FIGURE 4 - KRAFTS (1983) - THEOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY (Kraft's theological assumptions)	COMMUNICATION THEORY (Kraft's interdiscipline integration)
God: - the REALITY, Originator of principle (215) - God' s communication goalpersonal relationship with man (20-22) - the MESSAGE of communication (58,207)	Assumption: - "God abides by the communicational rules he built into his creation"; therefore "we can and should imitate God' s example" (215) - critical realism (223)
the Incarnation: (23-26) - identificational communication (15)	we learn from Jesus: (23-26) - personal participation in the lives of his receptors: - love = primary concern for receptor - respects, trusts and makes himself dependent on and vulnerable to receptor
the Bible: = record of the revelation of God' s message (215) = manual / case-book of communication (16) = precedents and principles of communication (16) = inspiration of message extends to method (3)	communicator should: -adopt the receptor' s frame ofeference (culture, language, etc.) (41); -have relational and specific message (21)
'truth': - meaning determined by receptor (89-108) - relativity, receptor-dependence (109-113)	message: (75-82) - interaction, multiple, irretrievable, complex, 6 types
hermeneutics: (189-190) -interpreting the Bible = communication interpreting the "truth"(interpretational reflex)	meaning exists: (109-133) - neither objectively (external) nor subjectively (in symbols); - is result of interpretation; thus receptor-dependent and is relative
the Gospel: life-changing message of the Great Commission (i.e. 'communicating the good news throughout the world')(17)	Jesus is the master/effective communicator: (22-34, 195-207) -7 things to learn: 1) segment audience; 2) enter receptor's frame of reference; 3) control vehicles; 4) self + message; 5) credible; 6) relevant; 7) specific
evangelism and Bible translation: -communicating for life-change (222); -the person as medium (160); -translation as communication (171)	-10 myths of communication (35-54) -3 factors of communication: (64-75) goal, audience, method of presentation
-conversion: -'paradigm shift"(radical change of perspective) (271) -church planting: dynamic equivalence Christian group	-receptors have needs (9); -7 stages of receptor's decision -making (105)
-effective communication for deep-level change: worldview, value, commitment (221-224) -dynamic communication with efficiency and impact (48, 82-88, 238-240)	

NOTE: () page numbering in *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* (1983)

Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his biblical interpretation from an evangelical perspective?

- based on "The Willowbank Report"? -- NO
- based on "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy"? -- YES

Dr. Kraft was on of the dozens of participants and presenters (Kraft 1980b) at the Consultation on Gospel and Culture held at Willowbank, Somerset Bridge, Bermuda from 6th to 13th January 1978, sponsored by the Lausanne Theology and Education Group. "The Willowbank Report" was published (Coote and Stott 1980:308-342) as the result of the gathering. His input at the consultation and the drafting of "The Willowbank Report" could be identified and there is *no*

apparent *conflict* between that report and his ethno-theological model.

However, implicit in Kraft's model of ethno-theology in terms of *biblical interpretation* are two assumptions that are *in conflict* with "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy": i.e. his epistemological assumption is in conflict with Article III and his methodological assumption with Article V.

Firstly, in his reaction against the rationalist's (like Carl Henry or Harold Lindell) insistence on "propositional/objective truth" to be "static" and his avoidance of neo-orthodoxy (like Barth and Thiselton) "subjective truth," he opted for Ian Barbour's (1974) "critical realism" for the sake of being theoretically consistent to arrive at a "relational truth" (Walters 1982) which Kraft described as "receptor-oriented" understanding of truth (Kraft 1979a). The Bible being "God's revelational information" is only "potential revelation" until the recipient's proper understanding / interpreting to have the "meaning" (with the Holy Spirit as the activator).

This is at variance with Article III of "The Chicago Statement," which states that "[w]e deny the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity" (Geisler 1980:494-495). John Dahms added to A. Holmes' (1977:34-38) two-dimensional understanding of "truth" to be three: "in biblical usage truth is sometimes a quality of propositions, sometimes a quality of persons and things (especially a characteristic of ultimate reality), and sometimes a quality of conduct or action" (Dahms 1994:8). And the "unity of truth" is to be found in the Logos — the Word— Incarnated and inscripturated. See Appendix IV for the multidimensional, multi-level, multi-contextual understanding of God's revelation that would allow a "symphonic multidisciplinary integration" under the direction of the Triune God (i.e. the Father likened to the composer, the Son the music / theme and the Holy Spirit the conductor, using the same score—the Word Incarnate and inscripturated.)

Secondly, Kraft's ethno-theology model has a methodological assumption that is *not in accordance* with Article V of "The Chicago Statement": "God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive . . . deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings" (Geisler 1980:495). Kraft's model is built on the "synchronic" dimension of "functional linguistics" and "transformational grammar" which would lead him to be devoid of the historical dimension of the Bible in his interpretation (e.g. "progressive revelation" and the Christian faith, e.g. Israel and the New Testament church as God's covenant people, see Conn 1974:4; Dyrness 1980:40). His extensive, almost exclusive, use of the communication model and the emphasis on God's "dynamic continuous interaction" with humanity would have similar effects of denying the closed "canon" of the Bible historically and thus confusing "inspiration" with "illumination," see Appendix III. Here are examples of Kraft's "unscriptural" statements:

- God has inspired and still inspires (Kraft 1979a:205; 1987:126).

- Yet in many ways tradition ('law'), tribe and ceremony in Hebrew culture were the functional equivalents of grace, freedom, and philosophizing in Greek culture. The latter are not necessarily superior ways of expressing the Gospel, just different culturally (Kraft

1979a: 232).

- Yet I had concluded that a living God is a still revealing God (Kraft 1987:126).

The historicity and historical dimension of the Christian faith cannot and should not be lost by the indiscriminately adoption of a mere synchronic / communicational / dynamic interaction model of "time -zero" for the sake of emic-based understanding of "meaning" or efficient communication with impact, because these have ill-effects on his interpretation of the Bible and cross-cultural theologizing. Kraft's "unscriptural" statements of Figure 2 (in []) warrant some comments here.

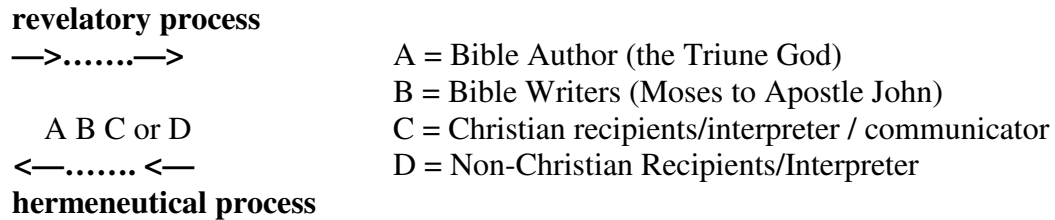
God is not just the "MESSAGE" of Christian communication (Kraft 1979a: chapter 9; 1983:58, 207). Jesus, the Incarnate Word is not just the "master / effective communicator" (Kraft 1979a:chapter 6; 1983:23-34, 195-207; see Figure 1 and Figure 2). If "Jesus of Nazareth" (termed "form" in Kraft's model to be considered "relative") should be separated from the "Christ of *kerygma*" (termed "meaning" in Kraft's model to be "receptor oriented / determined") as Kraft has done (e.g. "word/form" separated from "meaning" in linguistics and from "meaning/message" in communication) then this Christology of Kraft is no longer evangelical and this type of interdisciplinary integration (of linguistic and communication sciences with theology) is improper. The Bible, the inscripturated Word, is neither just the "the measure of revelation" nor just "the record of the revelational information from God," nor the "manual / case-book of communication" (Kraft 1979a:187-190; 1983:16, 215, see Appendix V). Carson (1977) criticized Kraft' s view of the Bible "as a casebook" and made some strong statements:

He treats the Bible as a casebook, in which different narratives or passages might reasonably be applied to one particular culture but not to another . . . it appears as if Kraft' s reliance on contemporary hermeneutics has simultaneously gone too far and not far enough. He has gone too far in that by treating the Bible as a casebook he does not ask how the pieces fit together. Indeed, he necessarily assumes that they do not . . . But he does not go far enough in that he fails to recognize that even basic statements such as "Jesus is Lord" are in certain respects culturally conditioned . . . "Jesus" is not an entirely unambiguous proper noun; are we referring to the Jesus of the Mormons, the Jesus of the Jehovah' s Witnesses, the Jesus of liberal Protestantism . . . of orthodox Christianity (Carson 1993:58-59)

Kraft' s use of the Bible to formulate his "theology of communication" and his application of the RO-/DE-principle in hermeneutics and cross-cultural theologizing is a violation of the general teaching (termed "plain meaning" or not being in "functional control of the Bible" by McQuilkin 1980). In simple terms, Kraft' s biblical interpretation and missiological formulation is "biblical" but not "scriptural."

Since God' s revelation and our interpretation have multidimensional, multi-level, multi-contextual complexity, evangelical interpretation and cross-cultural theologizing (Conn 1978:44-45; Wan 1994) should not only be "biblical" but also "scriptural," not individualistic but communal and complex ("convenantal community" in Conn 1984:231-235;"complexity and necessity" in Wan 1994; see Appendix VI and Figure 5 below).

Figure 5- THE REVELATORY and HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE



As one evangelical anthropologist observed, "Kraft has opened himself up to the charge of being too beholden to the ' God of culture' and a ' high view of culture/low view of scripture' ." (Hesselgrave 1991:129).

Has Kraft misused the communication and social sciences in his missiological formulation from an evangelical perspective:

- based on "The Willowbank Report"? -- NO
- based on "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy"? -- Yes

Kraft *has not misused* the communication and social sciences in his *missiological formulation*, from an evangelical perspective based on "The Willowbank Report," but *did so* if examined on the basis of "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy." Implicit in his model of ethno theology are two questionable assumptions: anthropological assumption cf. Article XIV and methodological assumption cf. Article XVIII.

In contemporary linguistic science, language is considered axiomatically to be "an arbitrary system for communication" that is relative in value and morally neutral. Kraft (following Nida, Pike, etc.) made use of the translation / communication model (i.e. the RO- and DE-principle, see Figure 2) and extensively applied it to transculturation, cross-cultural theologizing and evangelism, etc. The anthropological assumption is that "culture is analogous to language in that the relationship between cultural forms and the meanings which they convey is essentially arbitrary" (Ramseyer 1983:111).

Evangelical Christian anthropologists can neither assume "culture" to be morally neutral, presupposing it to be relative in value (i.e. human cultures approximate the "scriptural" standing in varying degrees), nor merely arbitrary (i.e. the image of God, the fallenness of humanity, the transforming power of the gospel, etc., cf. reviewers: Adeney 1980:26; Henry 1980:157; Ramseyer 1983:110). The importance of the New Testament epistles in terms of fulfillment of the Old Testament books is based on the assumption of "the unity and internal consistency of Scripture" (Article XIV) and is not due to the cultural preference of mono-cultural Western missionaries and could not be opted out by any cultural groups because of cultural affinity to or preference for portions of the Bible (Kraft 1979a:chapters 13-15; cf. Carson 1987 and 1993).

"We affirm that the text of Scripture. . . den[ies] the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing or discounting its

teaching” is affirmed by “The Chicago Statement” (Article XVIII). It is at variance with Kraft’s methodological assumption which is communication-reductionist and instrument-teleological.

The term “communication” used by Kraft is frequent and fluid. For a communicologist like Kraft, everything is “communication.” Yet Kraft provided no specific definition of the term “communication” in either 1979a or 1983; the closest one of such is as follows:

The use of the terms *preach* and *proclaim* as virtually the only translations of *kerusso* and several other Greek terms suggest. . . In present day English, at least, such a term is readily at hand in the word *communicate*. I would, therefore, contend that the broad presentation of the gospel is intended by such Greek terms as *kerusso*, it would be more accurate to translate it “communicate (Kraft 19783:43).

Subsequently, Kraft can include everything under the term “communicate.” According to Kraft’s theology of communication (see Figure 4): “God is the MESSAGE of communication, “the Incarnation is identification communication,” translating and interpreting the Bible is “communicate,” etc. Thus “communicate” is a catch -all generic label (from God’s inspiration, redemption, and salvation to the Christian’s evangelism, theologizing, and church planting) that is so broad, so vague, so inclusive, etc. that it would confuse those who seek to communicate effectively and impactfully to use the term "communication" more carefully.

Kraft’s communication -reductionist model of the “RO - / DE-principle” (see Figure 2) has a methodological assumption that evangelical Christians would question, including his methodology statement, “the inspiration of the Bible extends both to the message and the method” (Kraft 1983:3). Reviewer Ramseyer sounded the alarm:

In far too many cases, however, it has been assumed that the gospel is simply a message to be communicated and that whatever these sciences tell us about the communication of messages can be used to facilitate the communication of the gospel (Ramseyer 1983:108)

The gospel is not like any “message.” Evangelism is not like any communication (McQuilkin 1977:40-41). Conversion is not just “paradigm shift.” The Incarnation is not just “identification communication.” There are the divine dimension, the, spiritual reality, the theo-dynamic and angel-dynamic contexts (see Figure 6). In all the examples listed above, “communication” is only “the necessary bit not sufficient” factor and is only one dimension of reality. To be communication-reductionistic is to be simplistic in theory, “biblical” but not “scriptural” (see Appendix IV to Appendix VI), just communicational without commitment in “heart” and “life” (see Conn 1978:43 for discussion on John Calvin’s *theologia pietatis* of covenant witness with covenant life).

The methodological assumption in terms of instrumental/teleological presupposition/ preoccupation (Wan 1994) is a serious problem from an evangelical perspective. Conn (1978:42; 1984:192-205) wrongly identified McGavran’s attempt to reduce the gospel to a “core” of threefold affirmations for evangelization as the result of Cartesian rationalism and stated that “the simple gospel is never that simple.” (A better option is to have a “center set” of approach that is theo-dynamic, Christocentric, scripturally sound and culturally sensitive, Wan 1982b, 1994). Kraft’s model of ethno theology shared the same instrumental/ teleological

presupposition/ preoccupation with success, efficiency and impact. (Even more alarming is the "functional Trinitarian" view of God embraced by both Nida (1959:53) and Kraft (1979a:195). This would explain his readiness to propose his felt-need, non-combative, receptor-oriented approach for "minimal dislocation," and maximum efficiency in his contextualized Muslim evangelism (Conn 1984:192-195; Heldenbrand 1982, 1985; Kraft 1982b; McQuilkin 1977:40) (See Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 – WAN’S ANALYSIS OF KRAFT’S (1983) MODEL

KRAFTS MODEL		WAN’S ANALYSIS	
COMMUNICATION PATTERN	COMMUNICATION CATEGORY	CHRISTIAN EQUIVALENCE	MISSING ELEMENT
know and master the principle of: form, function, and meaning	surface level: multiplicity of form and function	understanding the Scripture; personal evangelism	inspiration: Bible = divine-human Book evangelism/ illumination: divine-human interaction
receptor-oriented communication	deep-level: paradigm-shift	spiritual repentance and conversion	kernel level: personal interaction (like human sexual intimacy)
communication with efficiency and impact	goal-oriented communication	spiritual reality of being born-again	deep level: spiritual regeneration (like amalgamation with genetic pooling)
DE-Christian group	successful and efficient communication	discipleship and church planting	transformed life, committed disciple, organismic church with body-life

For evangelicals the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Ro 1:16-17) and theo-dynamic. Evangelism is different from other kinds of communication; similar to incarnation, inscriptionation, and illumination for it is theo-dynamic in nature, Christo-centric, multi-contextual, multi-dimensional, multi-individual (the Triune God, the Bible-writer, the human messenger/ evangelist, the receptor, etc see Appendix IV and Appendix V). It is not human-centered, not merely message / meaning / means-based, not receptor-dependent alone, not outcome-determined. In Christianity, "the means" and "the messenger," are also determined by the "message" of God-revealing truth, God-redeeming power, and in a God-character way. Following Nida' s lead on "supracultural/cultural, absolute/relative" principle, Kraft credited God with being the only "absolute"; everything else is relative, cultural, functional, adaptable, etc. was for the purpose of building a biblical basis for his pragmatic/functional/relative/teleological way of theoretical formulation and missiological application.

"Scripturally" speaking, evangelism is not just a Christian' s effort to minimize the negative elements of the gospel to "market it" for effective membership recruitment for a "Christian club." It is a divinely motivated/enabled/guided Christian' s effort to make committed disciples (not just communicating the gospel message to appeal to the "felt-need" of the receptive recipient) whose transformed lives should be nurtured in the Christian fellowship of the church—an organism, not a social aggregate of individuals with "paradigm shift."

However, Kraft' s most recent "paradigm shift" 1989:8285) and "practice shift." (1987:127) have shown a very healthy and scriptural shift from this methodological presupposition and preoccupation with "gospel-marketing," receptor' s felt need, consumer orientation for success, efficiency, etc. His articles (1986a, 1987b, 1991, 1992) have repeatedly emphasized “allegiance encounter,” and “truth encounter” (as suggested by reviewers Conn 1984:229 -235; Ramseyer

1983:112) in addition to the popular understanding or “power encounter,” thanks to his former colleague Paul Hiebert (for Kraft’s recognition, see 1992:215). And his books (1989, 1992, 1994a 1994b) have included the confrontational, conflicting, combative elements of the gospel and evangelism (as suggested by reviewer Ramseyer 1983:112-113). Better yet, the Trinity is involved (as suggested by reviewers Conn 1974:45, 1984:231; Dyrness 1980:40; Henry 1980:163; Wan 1982b) at every stage of encounter with a sound “scriptural” foundation for “power encounter” (1992:217), “allegiance encounter” and “truth encounter” (1992:218).

This is a full circle, of going from the study of homino-culture (e.g. from linguistic and communication sciences to social sciences) to theo-culture (e.g. inspiration, incarnation, etc.), to angel-culture (e.g. power-encounter) and back to homino-culture. There is evidence of a holistic view of humanity (with the multi-dimension of cognition, volition and affection), a balanced view of human culture, a scriptural understanding of reality, a non-dualistic and non-dichotomistic frame of reference, and non-reductionistic approach to ministry (Wan 1988, 1989, 1991b, 1995).

CONCLUSION

In this study, Kraft’s contribution to inter-disciplinary integration by using the communication and social sciences has been analyzed and recognized. His use/misuse of the communication and social sciences in biblical interpretation and missiological formulation have been examined and critiqued. A new concept and definition of “culture” has been proposed as a constructive suggestion for the improvement of Kraft’s theoretical and theological (evangelical) approach. This new “vari-dynamic model” will lead to a “symphonic approach” (not just dialogue or triologue) of multi-disciplinary, multi-level, multi-contextual, multi-dimensional integration. Kraft’s recent shift from reductionistic, non-dichotomistic, non-evangelical and “unscriptural” approaches of inter-disciplinary integration is most encouraging.

It is high time for Dr. Kraft to revise his influential yet controversial book *Christianity in Culture* (1979a) incorporating his new insights and recent discoveries, as a contribution to evangelical scholarship in interdisciplinary integration.

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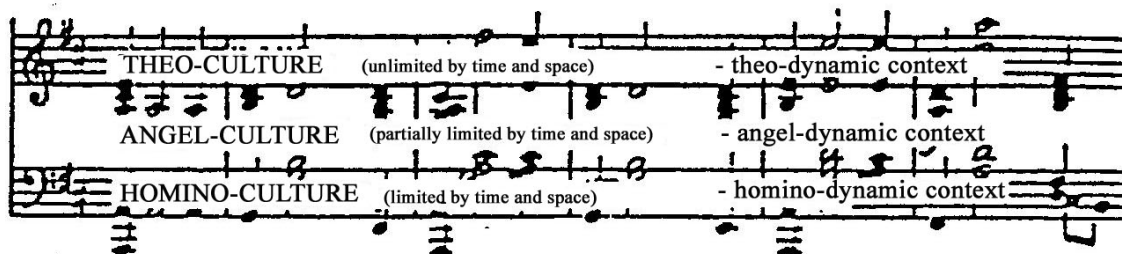
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APPENDIX II – A SYMPHONIC APPROACH TO INTER-DISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION: A VARI-DYNAMIC MODEL²



THEO-CULTURE	<i>(theo-dynamic context)</i>
trinitario-dynamics:	Trinity, Christology, pneumatology, covenant, etc.
Inspirio-dynamics:	inspiration, illumination, etc.
Soterio-dynamics:	predestination, atonement, etc.
ANGEL-CULTURE	<i>(angel-dynamic context)</i>
theophano-dynamics;	theophany, vision, dream, etc.
Angelo-dynamics:	angiology, deliverance, etc.
Satano-dynamics:	demonology, power encounter, etc.
HOMINO-CULTURE	<i>(homino-dynamic context)</i>
Christo-dynamics:	incarnation, missianology, etc.
Missio-dynamics:	<i>missio dei, possessio, elenctic</i> , etc.
Culturo-dynamics:	enculturation, assimilation, westernization, etc.
Socio-dynamics:	socialization, system theory, structural analysis, etc.
Psycho-dynamics:	cognitive analysis, worldview studies etc /emic, etc.
Behavioral-dynamics:	reciprocity, kinesics, proxemics, etc.
Linguistic-dynamics:	descriptive linguistics, semantics, etc.

² The "vari-dynamic model" (as in aerodynamic or thermodynamic model) includes the various dynamic systems within the model.

APPENDIX III – A SYNOPSIS OR REVELATION, INSPIRATION AND ILLUMINATION(Wan 1994:6)

	Revelation	Inspiration	Illumination
Key Question	What is communicated?	How is it communicated?	Why is it communicated??
Answer	the material / message communicated	the method of recording	the meaning of record
Focus - What	The product	The process	The practical and spiritual enlightenment
-Who	The revealer, the author	The instrumental Bible writers	The receiver of the message
Objective	The communication of God's message to man	The complete infallibility of God's message through man	man through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13.14)
Objective / Subjective	objective disclosure	objective disclosure and or subjective appreciation (1Co 7:10, 12,25.40)	Subjective apprehension
Subject	The self-revealing God	God's chosen few	all God's children
Time	Past historical fact: special revelation e.g. incarnation and inspiration present-continued effects: creation and conscience	Past historically terminated event: inspiring Bible writers by the Divine Author (Rev 22:18.19)	Present process of conviction and conversion
Technical Term(s)	Special revelation: i.e. redemptive revelation both in Christ the living Word (incarnation Heb 1:2, Jn 1:14) and the inspired/inscripturated Word General revelation: creation and conscience (Ps 19; Rom 1 and 2) based on the historic truth	Inscripturation: the process of the inspired truth as infallible and authoritative truth of faith and practice Inerrancy: the trustworthiness and truthfulness of God's inspiration. Plenary inspiration: all parts of the O.T and N.T. are inspired and infallible	None
Catchy Phrase	Inspiration without revelation as in the Book of Acts (Ac 1:4)	Inspiration including revelation as in the Apocalypse (Rev 1:1-11)	Inspiration with illumination as in the Prophets (1Pe 1:11). Inspiration including illumination as in the case of Paul (1 Cor 2:12)
Similarity	All dealing with God's interaction with humans of the Scripture leading to a better knowledge of God and his plan of salvation for humanity		

APPENDIX V - GOD'S REVELATION TO MAN (Wan 1994:7)
(multi-dimension, multi-level, multi-context)

CATEGORY \ DIMENSION		THE WORD (INCARNATION)	IN THE WORD (INSCRIPTURATION)	THROUGH THE WORD (INTERPRETATION)
NATURE OF TRUTH		essential and efficient	essential: being God's Word	efficient: becoming God's Word
PRESENTATION OF TRUTH		personal and propositional	propositional	personal
PERSPECTIVE - CHRISTIAN		objective and subjective	objective	subjective
TIME		historical and historic	historical	historic
PROCESS		completed and continuous	completed	continuous
WORK / LEVEL:	Divine	the Christ perfect God	H.S.: Author, inspiring	H.S: illuminating
	Human	the Jesus: perfect Man	Bible writers: inspired	interpreter: exegeting
PRODUCT		divine-human Perfect Being	divine-human perfect Book	imperfect efforts need divine aids
CONTEXT:	historico-	past and present	past	past-> present
	culture-	dual level: theo-culture homo-culture	multi-faceted: Jewish/Hellenistic /Aramaic/Roman	multiple in no. and variety of cultures
	linguistic-	heavenly/Gk/Aramaic/ Hebrews	multi-lingual: Heb/Gk/Aramaic	many contemporary languages

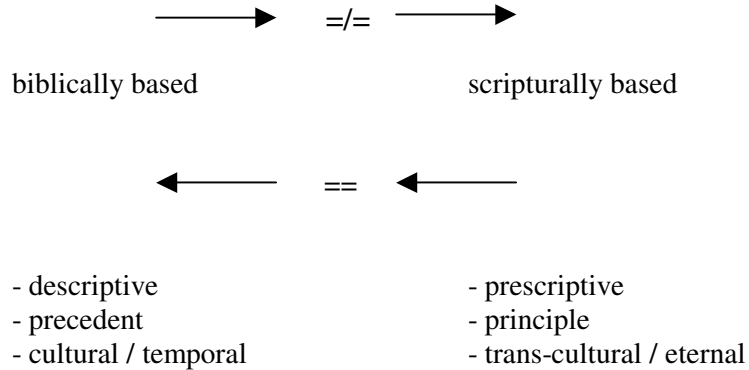
**APPENDIX VI –
CONTEXTUAL INTERACTION OF THE TRIUNE GOD’S REVELATION TO MAN**

(Wan 1994:8) (multi-dimension, multi-level, multi-context)

CONTEXT\	THE WORK	THE WORD		THROUGH THE WORD
theo-culture	GENERAL REVELATION	SPECIAL REVELATION		INTERPRETATION / TRANSLATION
Homino-culture	H.S. Son FA	FA H.S. Son	FA Son H.S.	FA Son H.S.
	universe and mankind	Jesus = God -man Being	Bible = divine -human Book	contemporary interpreter/translator
	CREATION and CONSCIENCE	INCARNATION	INSPIRATION and INSCRIPTURATION	REGENERATION and ILLUMINATION

APPENDIX VI- TILE TWO QUESTIONS: BIBLICAL? SCRIPTURAL?

(Wan 1994:12)



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