

Views of the writers are not necessarily those of Canadian Theological Seminary.

Published three times each year by the Faculty of Canadian Theological Seminary

Subscription: \$5 per year; \$1.75 per issue

Material may be reproduced if credit is given

Editor: David F. Hartzfeld

Contributing Editors:

Rexford A. Boda, M.Sc., M.Div., President, Canadian Theological Seminary

Albert E. Cramer, Th.D., Vice-President/Dean, Church History

Leslie A. Andrews, D.Min., Christian Education

Joan Carter, M.A. Counseling

John V. Dahms, Th.D., New Testament

David F. Hartzfeld, Th.M., Old Testament

Jacob Klassen, M.A., Missions

Franklin Pyles, Ph.D., Systematic Theology

Samuel J. Stoesz, Th.D., Pastoral Studies

Enoch Wan, Ph.D., Director of Chinese Studies

Volume 9, Number 1 (Oct. 1982)

Bulletin of Canadian Theological Seminary

Psalm 72:8 inspired the naming of our journal at confederation: "He shall have dominion from sea to sea." May Canada peacefully become his dominion, to the glory of his glorious grace.

The Theological Application of the Contextual—Interaction Model of Culture

by Enoch Wan

This article is a sequel to "Critique of Missionary Anthropology" in the last issue, (Vol. 8 No. 3)

It is fitting that after critiquing functionalism one should present an alternative to the functional model of culture which is reductionistic and unbiblical. However, readers are reminded that this is a personal attempt to formulate a more biblical worldview for Christian faith and missiological study.¹ Since it is impossible to have a lengthy discussion and detailed presentation of the model in this article, only the definition and its theological application are briefly introduced. Consequently this model may be considered superficial by the theologian and simplistic by the social scientist.²

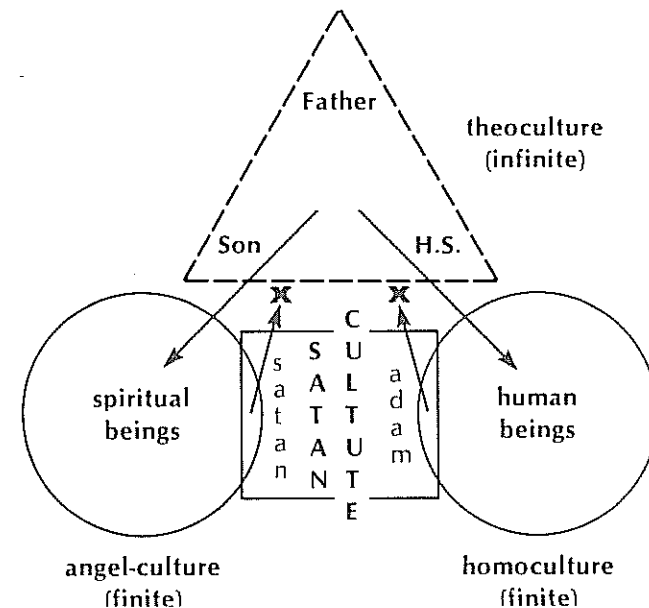
ORIGIN AND NATURE OF CULTURES³ (See Diagram 1)

"Culture" in the contextual-interaction model is defined as "the context/consequence of patterned behavior and/or symbolic interaction of personal Beings/Persons." The context of the symbolic interaction (i.e. divine communion and fellowship)⁴ among the Three Persons of the Triune God constitutes the theoculture. The consequence of their interaction (i.e. God, Spirit and the Word, cf. Gen 1:1-3, 7; John 1:1-3) is the creation of the cultures of angelic beings (angel-culture) and human beings (homoculture). Subsequent to the rebellious interaction of Satan

against God⁵ from angel-culture came the emergence of satan culture (i.e. the context of satanic influence and activity). According to biblical data various aspects of human culture are found to be in existence prior to the Fall, e.g. naming, schedule of work and rest, food gathering and vegetarian diet, the institution of marriage and procreation (Gen 2:1-3,7,19,25,28-29), symbolic and behavior interaction between God, Adam and Eve, as well as Satan i.e. various kinds of interactions such as marriage and companionship, fellowship and command, dialogue and the charge of "cultural mandate." (Gen 1:28-30). Therefore, angel-culture and homoculture have their origin in God and were good prior to the fall of Satan and man, and a high view of homoculture is required by biblical Christianity. Even after the fall, God interacted with man by means of His providential grace preparing for mankind: clothing, religious covenant, the religious-ritual of circumcision, religious sacrifice and law, (Gen 3:21;6:18;9:1-17;17:9-14; Ex 20;22;35).

The fall of man was patterned after the rebellious interaction of Satan against God. During the fall of man he aligned with Satan and hence homoculture converged with satan-culture. Consequently the image of God in man was marred, homoculture corrupted, and the whole creation is put under the curse and subjected to decay. However, God still interacts with man because of His love as evidenced by His providential grace and provisional salvation. God has repeatedly used homoculture to realize His plan of salvation and to reveal Himself in general and special revelation. A case in point is God's provision of animal-skin clothing replacing leaves. It was a protective action for mankind in a hostile environment under the curse. It was also a prophetic action of the shed blood of the Lamb of God and the imputation of His righteousness.

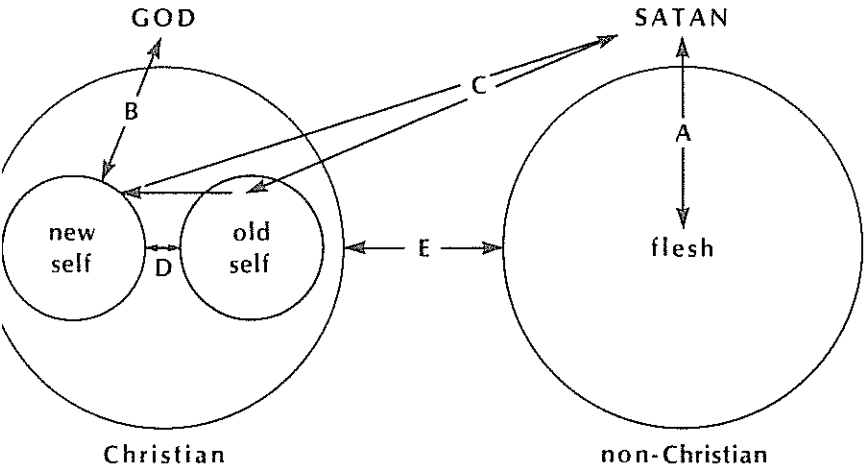
DIAGRAM 1—THE THREE CULTURES



O-LEVEL INTERACTION (See Diagram 2)

Incarnation of Christ is the inculturation of God into homoculture to reveal and to redeem man. Inspiration is God's revelatory interaction with individuals of the Bible. Illumination and indwelling are the enlightening and enabling interaction of the Holy Spirit with man. Regeneration is a salvatory interaction of the Holy Spirit with man leading to the inward transformation of a "new inner being". Sanctification is the process of victorious interaction of the "new self" over the "old self" and spiritual maturation is the process of enculturation of a new babe in Christ

DIAGRAM 2—MICRO-LEVEL CONTEXTUAL-INTERACTION OF CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN



VARIOUS DYADIC INTERACTIONS

- A. Satan and non-Christians:
 - Satan rules and controls non-Christian
 - unregenerated man follows and obeys Satan
- B. the Triune God and Christian
 - the Father predestines and elects
 - the Son atones and intercedes
 - the H.S. regenerates and indwells
 - Christian believes and loves God
- C. Satan and the "old self" of Christian
 - temptation and persecution
 - resists and battles against Satan
- D. "new-self" and "old-self" within Christian
 - in constant conflict with one another
 - fruits of the H.S. or lust and death of the flesh
- E. Christian and non-Christian
 - evangelizes and loves non-Christian
 - temptation and persecution of Christian

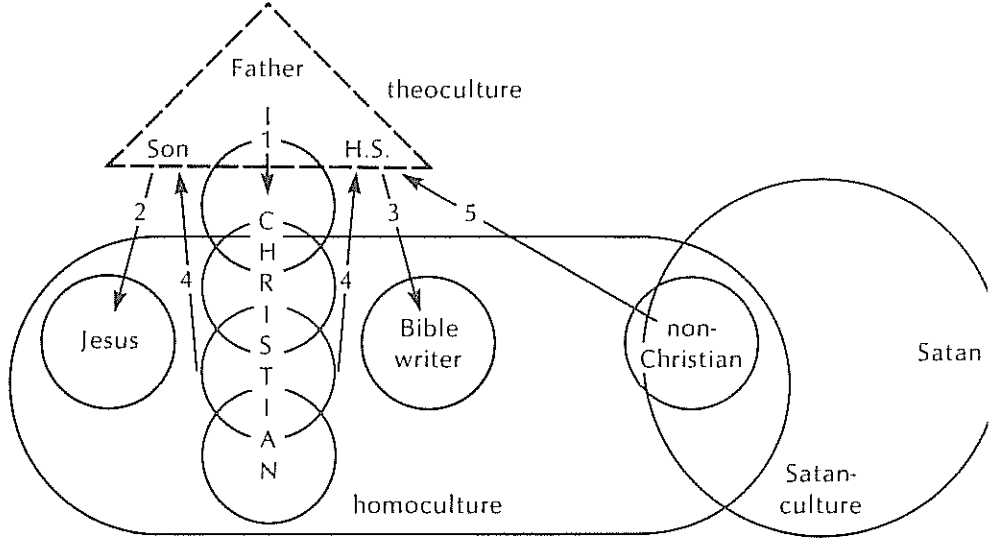
into theoculture. Spiritual death is the negative interaction of man's rejection of Christ and the alienative interaction of man from God who is the source of life and blessing. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the resistant interaction of an unbeliever against the convicting interaction of the Holy Spirit negating the possibility of the convergence of theoculture and homoculture in oneself. The "already but not yet" nature of the Kingdom of God can be explained in terms of the convergence of theoculture with homoculture on a micro-level progressively moving towards the macro-level. (See diagram 5)

MACRO-LEVEL INTERACTION BETWEEN GOD, MAN AND SATAN (See Diagram 3)

The covenantal interaction between God and man has God's immutable attributes as its foundation. God's gracious covenant with the political entity of Israel of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Christ for the spiritual Israel of the New Testament. The Church is the community of redeemed individuals and the aggregate of the called-out ones from the world. The Church is to be the channel of God's grace and the means of transforming homoculture by God's power. Transcended humanity in Christ is the workmanship of God in Christ. God's children with transformed life are not to conform to the world but are sent into the world with the Gospel. The Gospel of the Kingdom is to reach and rescue sinners by the Power of God from the realm and rule of Satan.

Satan is a "super-human" being with relatively limited power in comparison with

DIAGRAM 3—MACRO-LEVEL OF CONTEXTUAL-INTERACTION BETWEEN GOD, MAN AND SATAN



- 1. predestination & election
- 2. incarnation-inculturation
- 3. inspiration & illumination
- 4. sanctification & glorification
- 5. resistance & blasphemy

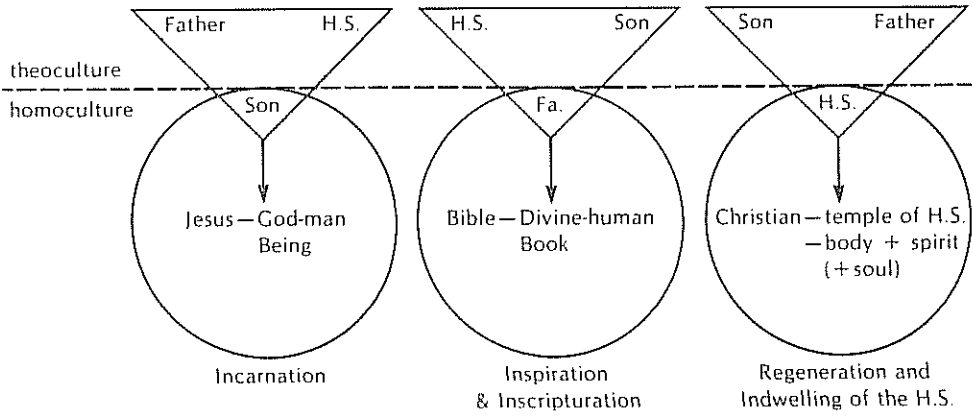
od. He caused the fall of man and henceforth satan-culture converges with omoculture. He controls unregenerated human beings and rules over the evil world system of man. Yet God is greater than Satan. Christ by His death at the cross as defeated Satan and has broken Satan's power over mankind (Jn 12:31, 16:11; Col 14,15; Heb 2:14,15; Rev 1:18). Therefore theoculture dominates satan-culture.

Christians, by the grace of God and their faith in Christ, are saved and secured in God's love (Jn 10:28; Ro 8:38; 1 Jn 4:4). When interacting with Satan, Christians are to resist his attack from within via the flesh (Ro 8:1-11; Gal 5:16-26) and his persistent temptation and persecution from without (Ja 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8,9). Christians can rely on God's enabling interaction with power from within (Col 1:29; 2 Cor 4:7-9,13:3; Eph 20) and without (Eph 1:18-22; Ro 8:37-39) to have victorious interaction over satan-culture (2 Cor 10:4-6).

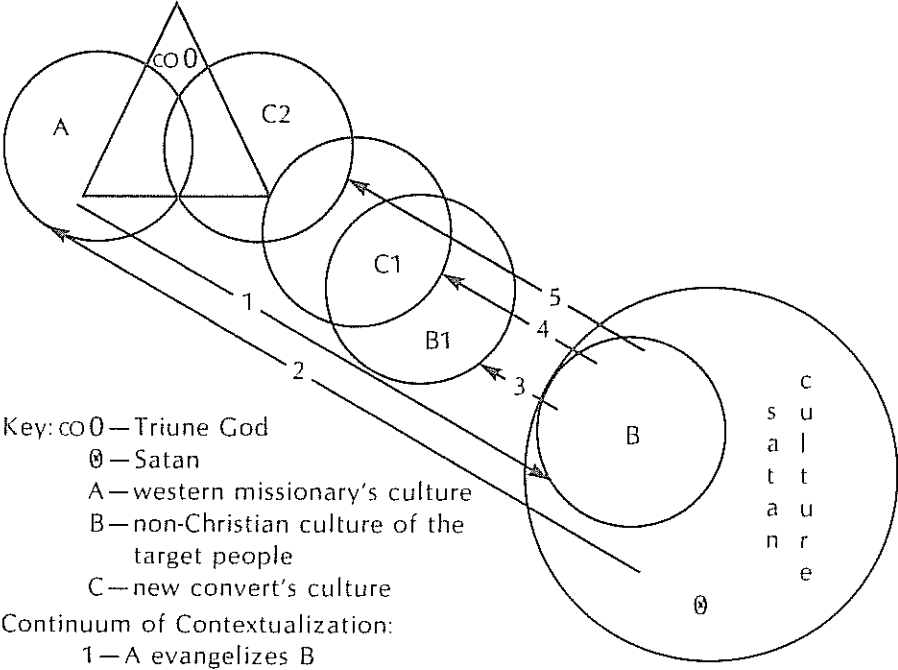
CONTEXTUALIZATION: CONVERGENCE OF THEOCULTURE WITH HOMOCULTURE (See Diagrams 4 and 5)

"Contextualization" is defined as the "bridging of temporal-spatial-cultural gap" on a micro-level or "the convergence of theoculture with homoculture" on a macro-level. It is a progressive continuum originating from the Triune God through the individual Christian and the Church. The incarnation is Christ, the eternal and infinite God, becoming the historical Jesus tabernacling among man and particularizing in Jewish culture. God's revelation of Himself in human history and inspiration of the Old Testament and New Testament writers is inscripturated in Hebrew and Greek languages in the contexts of Jewish and Hellenistic cultures. A similar pattern is found in the working of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration and illumination of His children. Thus the contextual-interaction of the Triune God with man provides the model for the ministry of the Church. Intracultural evangelism, intercultural missionary ministry, Bible translation, etc. are attempts to bridge the temporal-spatial-cultural gap in order to bring about the convergence of theoculture with homoculture (with various subsystems of the missionary's own and the target people's cultures). Therefore the missiological model of contextualization is a concentric paradigm of theoculture and two or more subsystems of homoculture.

**DIAGRAM 4—CONTEXTUALIZATION (MICRO-LEVEL)
—BRIDGING THE TEMPORAL-SPATIAL-CULTURAL GAP BY THE TRIUNE GOD**



**DIAGRAM 5—CONTEXTUALIZATION (MACRO-LEVEL)
—CONCENTRIC CONVERGENCE OF THEOCULTURE WITH HOMOCULTURE (WITH VARIOUS SUBSYSTEMS)**



Key: co0—Triune God
 Θ—Satan
 A—western missionary's culture
 B—non-Christian culture of the target people
 C—new convert's culture

Continuum of Contextualization:
 1—A evangelizes B
 2—Θ hinders A (1 Thess 2:18)
 3—B contacted by A with the Gospel; B becomes B1
 4—B1 comes into contact with co0 through A; B1 converted to become C1 with initial interaction with co0
 5—contextualization in progress with a concentric convergence of C2 + A + co0 towards further emergence

CONCLUSION

In the contextual-interaction model of culture, the dynamic interplay and resultant relationships between God, man and Satan are delineated in terms of theoculture, angel-culture and homoculture. It differs from the functional model in several aspects:

1. It is an open system whereas functionalism is a closed system excluding as "supra-cultural" from the cultural system of man.
2. It is a realistic description of Christianity in terms of the interaction and interactants of God, man and Satan. Functionalism focuses on the theoretical abstraction of "culture" as a well-integrated, self-persistent system.
3. Its *ex post facto* nature leaves room for divine intervention in the course of human history and portrays His salvatory and revelatory interaction with human culture. Functionalism is reductionistic and instrumental leading to theological relativism.
4. It presents a theocentric understanding of evangelicalism. Functionalism limits God to the deterministic and anthropocentric model of culture.

5. It does not arbitrarily superimpose an unbiblical model of functionalism upon the revealed biblical data. The inspired Scriptures and the incarnated Christ show a patterned symbolic and behavior-interaction within the Persons of the Triune God and without theoculture having to reach out to interact with homoculture, though it does do so. God is consistent in His nature but at times He chooses to supersede natural laws and at all times surpasses human understanding in order to accomplish His divine decree. The predictability of the contextual-interaction model is based on the revealed nature of God and the inspired Scriptures of Christianity.

Christian faith is not a religious theory nor should conversion be explained as a "paradigm shift." Biblical Christianity is a relational reality of God-man interaction and Heilsgeschichte (salvation history) is the progressive convergence of theoculture with homoculture.

FOOTNOTES

1. The theoretical root of the "contextual-interaction" model presented here can be found in anthropologists F. Barth's "transactional model" (1966) and J. Barnes "network analysis" (1971); "symbolic interactionism" of social psychologist G.H. Mead (1934) and sociologist H. Blumer (1969); philosophers S. Pepper's "contextualism" (1942) and M. Buber's "I-Thou dialogue" (1958).
2. The anthropological and missiological aspects of the contextual-interaction model is further developed and delineated in a forthcoming volume entitled *God, Man and Culture: Rebuilding Christian Anthropology* dealing with standard topics such as enculturation, acculturation and contextualization, etc.
3. The concepts of "homoculture," "theoculture" and "satan-culture" are coined and presented here to introduce the contextual-interaction model.
4. Cf. In 14:16ff; 15:26; 17:21-24, Gal 4:6, 5:19.
5. See 1Tim 3:6; 2Pet 2:4.
6. The term "inculturation" is coined by L. Barney (1973) combining the anthropological concept of "enculturation" and the theological meaning of "incarnation."
7. 2Cor 4:16, Eph 2:10; 3:16; Gal 6:5.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, J.A.
1971 "Network and political process." In J.C. Mitchell, ed., *Social networks in Urban Situations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Barney G.L.
1973 ed., *The Gospel and Frontier Peoples*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Barth, F.
1966 "The supracultural and the cultural." In P. Pierce Beaver, *Models of Social Organization*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (Occasional Paper No. 23).
- Blumer, H.
1969 *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Buber, M.
1958 *I and Thou*. N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Mead, G.H.
1934 *Mind, Self and Society*. Ill.: University of Chicago.
- Pepper, S.
1942 *World Hypotheses*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.