

Communicating Biblical Truth to the Nations Without Compromise

Introducing the Archer Framework
for Biblical Contextualization

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Introduction

The ever-present problem with cross-cultural mission work involves the tension present when communicating God's unchanging biblical truth with fluid and varying cultures or worldviews of the nations. Varying cultural meanings incongruous with God's truth are ubiquitous among the peoples of the world. Disparate worldviews tend to create a moving target of ever-changing cultures, expressions, terminologies, and ideas. In a word, cultures and worldviews are not only different, but fluid. Regardless of such cultural variations, biblical Christian missionaries must remain true to God's unchanging revelation when communicating God's truth in the process of making "disciples of all the nations," and "teaching them to observe all" that Jesus commanded (Matt 28:18–20 NASB).

This article offers a solution to this problem, maintaining Christian Scripture as the control throughout the process of cross-cultural missionary communication.¹ Because the meaning of God's unchanging truth is resident within the text of Scripture, missionary communication must ensure no loss in original biblical meaning when missionaries communicate cross-culturally.² The author refers to this concept as *biblical contextualization*. Biblical contextualization utilizing the principles illustrated via the Archer Framework (introduced below) will ensure that we are communicating biblical truth to the nations without compromising that truth.

The Problem: Unbiblical Contextualization

Biblical contextualization aims at more than mere acceptance of our message or varying cultural expressions of Christian practices. We must take great care that we contextualize for understanding of God's truth, not simply contextualize for mere acceptance, relevance, or behavior.

When attempting to be culturally sensitive, we may fall into one of two errors. The first error occurs when one thinks it necessary to alter God's truth from its original meaning in an effort to make it more acceptable or more relevant to a culture's worldview. Such a practice amounts to the error of corrupting God's truth, invites syncretism, and is clearly unacceptable for those who hold to the infallibility and inerrancy of Christian Scripture.

¹ See D. A. Carson, ed., *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1987), 220. Carson divides contextualization into two approaches that are distinct in their core philosophy and methodology. Carson explains, "Broadly speaking there are two brands of contextualization. The first assigns *control* to the context; the operative term is *praxis*, which serves as a controlling grid to determine the meaning of Scripture. The second assigns the *control* to Scripture, but cherishes the 'contextualization' rubric because it reminds us the Bible must be thought about, translated into and preached in categories relevant to the particular cultural context" (emphasis added).

² For a treatment emphasizing authorial intent see, William Patrick Brooks, "Critiquing Ethnohermeneutics Theories: A Call For An Author-Oriented Approach To Cross-Cultural Biblical Interpretation" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

The second error occurs when one attempts to entice people in another culture to accept something they may not fully understand (e.g., when Judson used the word for “crime” in his translation for “sin” in the Bible).³ Engaging people this way amounts to unethical manipulation, an attempt to get people to commit or act without their sincere understanding of the biblical reasons that might lead to such action. Such a practice may produce outward behavior but fall short of saving faith.

Falling off the road into either ditch is unacceptable. Neither of the errors described above glorifies the God of the Bible. Both errors would rise to the level of unethical engagement or manipulation in missionary communication. The first manipulates and violates the Word of God itself. The second manipulates and violates the people with whom we are attempting to share the Word of God and the saving gospel.

If the missionary over-contextualizes, syncretism may result. Syncretism is the illegitimate blending of true elements of biblical truth with non-Christian religious elements of the target culture.⁴ This results in compro-

³ Cory Gonyo, “Establishing Principles for Biblical Contextualization With Specific Application in Theravada and Folk Buddhism of Southeast Asia,” (PhD diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022), 139–140. “For example, in one Southeast Asian Buddhist culture, the Christian word for ‘sin’ has been translated for two hundred years with the *emic* meaning of ‘crime.’ Therefore, when people are asked if they have sinned, they always reply ‘no.’ Nevertheless, ‘crime’ is the word used for ‘sin’ in their translation of Scripture. Thus, when a missionary is talking about sin in this culture, it would be an error for him to force all of the hearers to admit that they are all guilty of crimes. Rather, the missionary must take great care in clarifying that this sin before God is a spiritual and eternal reality and goes far beyond earthly crime. The missionary must take time to clarify, define, and otherwise explain what Scripture means by the word ‘sin.’ Sin is biblically defined in relation to the Creator God (Rom 3:23; and Creator God is another concept Buddhists do not accept). They also do not have a Creator-Savior God in this Buddhist culture. Thus, the missionary must be careful not to presume that the use of the word for ‘sin’ is actually understood by his hearers until he has given it its biblical definition in relation to the holy, eternal, God.”

⁴ See Gailyn Van Rheenen, ed., *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006). See also the warning by Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 285. He writes, “One great danger the church faces is equating itself with an ethnic community or culture. The result is cultural Christianity.”

mised teachings which may seem comfortable to the receiving culture, but which no longer remain true to the teachings of Scripture. Paul Hiebert writes,

Are there no limits, then, to contextualization? This is probably the wrong way to ask the question. The question is not how far we can go in contextualizing Christianity while still remaining Christian. Rather, our concern is how we can become more truly Christian while making the call of the gospel more clear and appealing to those in our cultural context... The message of the gospel must not only be expressed in the categories and world view of the local culture, it must also fill them with biblical substance and so revolutionize them [emphasis added].⁵

The danger on the other end of the spectrum is under-contextualization. This occurs when the non-Christian audience does not truly understand what is being communicated. Under-contextualization fails to take seriously the cultural, historical, religious, and worldview differences between peoples. We may be communicating that which is true, but in ways that do not actually transfer that truth into the context of the receiver. Under-contextualization does not allow for the hearers to correctly understand the communication so that they may repent and believe because the concepts remain indistinguishable, unclear, or foreign.

We can achieve biblical contextualization if we apply our biblical convictions to our mission methodology, i.e., if we submit our methods and strategies to the authority, scrutiny, and control of Scripture, something

This leads to a loss of the universal nature of the gospel and of a mission passion to reach the ends of the world. A second danger is that of wedding itself to nation-states and thereby becoming a civil religion. It is the danger of believing that one country is more blessed by God than others, that one nation is at the forefront of advancing his kingdom on earth. This has been one of the great failures of the church throughout history.”

⁵ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 214–215.

David Hesselgrave called for in 2007.⁶ In line with biblical theology, we need to further develop the discipline of biblical contextualization.⁷ Biblical contextualization needs to include principles that guide us in faithful biblical teaching of the nations, while simultaneously guarding against over-contextualization and under-contextualization. The treatment herein is a call to remain faithful to the truth of Scripture in any and every context by utilizing a set of principles represented by the Archer Framework.

A Solution: Biblical Contextualization Employing the Archer Framework

God's eternal truth in Scripture is supra-cultural and therefore inherently and eternally relevant for every nation, tribe, and tongue.⁸ God's truth, which

⁶ See David J. Hesselgrave, "Will We Correct The Edinburgh Error? Future Mission in Historical Perspective," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 121–149. See also Zane Pratt, "Being Serious About the Gospel," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism* 1, no. 1 (2012): 6–11. Note Pratt, page 11, after he outlines our need for seriousness concerning the content, implications, urgency, and spread of the gospel, he writes, "Those who are serious about the gospel must submit their methods and strategies to the scrutiny and control of the Word of God, recognizing that God cares deeply about how we do what he calls us to do, and that he has not left us in the hands of secular marketing or the social sciences to figure out our strategies. His Word is sufficient for the how as well as the what."

⁷ For examples of biblical theology applied to missions see Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, eds., *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). See also, Daniel J. Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson, no. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson, no. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁸ See Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "Shall We 'Build Bridges' or 'Pull Down Strongholds?'" *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 217. Yarnell writes, "To speak of 'enabling' the gospel or of 'making' it 'relevant' appears to imply a low view of Scripture. It appears to assume either that grace actually resides in us rather than in Scripture, or in the culture rather than in Scripture... God's Word enables us to preach His Word; God's Spirit enables the hearer to believe His Word. Let us humbly admit that relevancy is determined by God's Word and not by man's culture, nor by the preacher. Our focus, therefore, should be upon translating the Word for proclamation and not upon trying to

is for every nation, tribe, and tongue, must likewise be communicated in a way that is intelligible in every nation, tribe, and tongue (Matt 28:18–20; Luke 24:45–47; Rev 7:9). Therefore, the supra-cultural and unchanging truth of God’s Word must be expressed in the varying cultures, languages, and worldviews without any loss of its original meaning.⁹

We need a model for biblical contextualization that upholds Scripture as the control in all Christian communication. Such a model will remain faithful to God’s meaning resident in the biblical text while being sensitive to *emic* meanings in receptor cultures and worldviews. Gailyn Van Rheenen helpfully defines the two vantage points of cultural perception: 1) the *emic* perspective which views culture from the inside, and 2) the *etic* perspective which views culture from the outside.¹⁰ Therefore, we may speak of the

make it culturally relevant.” See also Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 21. Fee and Stuart write, “Because the Bible is God’s Word, it has *eternal relevance*; it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God’s Word, we must listen - and obey. But because God chose to speak his Word through *human words in history*, every book in the Bible also has *historical particularity*; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written (and in some cases also by the oral history it had before it was written down). Interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the ‘tension’ that exists between its *eternal relevance* and its *historical particularity*” (italics original).

⁹ Robin Dale Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 159. Hadaway defines Christian contextualization as, “the correct application of biblical truth using insights from a society’s culture and worldview in order to communicate the unchanging gospel to a constantly changing world.” See also, Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 53. Hiebert reminds us, “The gospel must be distinguished from all human cultures. It is divine revelation, not human speculation. Since it belongs to no one culture, it can be adequately expressed in all of them.” David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2000), 128–129. Hesselgrave and Rommen rightly recognize that contextualization, “involves understanding a message revealed by God in Holy Scripture and respondents who have an inadequate or distorted understanding of God’s revelation,” concluding, “To be valid and authentic Christian contextualization must conform to the kind of revelation God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and the Bible writers claim for the written Word.”

¹⁰ See Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1991), 81. Van Rheenen writes, “There are two vantage points from which culture can be perceived: the *emic* and the *etic* (Pike 1971, 37–38). The *emic* perspective views culture from the inside. The *etic*, on the other hand, is the outsider’s view of culture. Kuhn’s model of paradigms is solely concerned with *emic* perspectives

scriptural meaning (derived through grammatical-historical hermeneutics) and a contextualized meaning (derived through *emic* understanding of a culture's worldview) without creating a dichotomy.¹¹ The biblical contextualization model must maintain the unchanging scriptural meaning of words

because he assumes that all paradigms are derived from within the culture. There are no supracultural sources of meaning beyond one's own culture. This approach leaves little room for a God who is transcendent to culture, the biblical message which was given outside of the culture, and the cross-cultural communicator who is an external source of paradigms." See also page 91, where Van Rheenen writes, "Christian missionaries minister most effectively when they are able to perceive cultures from a metacultural perspective. They emphatically stand above both their own culture and their host culture but operate within the paradigms of both cultures. Yet truth is not relative, based on a subjective search for truth within human cultural systems. Truth is of God, who has communicated to us in his Son. The missionary communicates the Christian worldview in culture paradigms understandable to each culture. To be effective, he participates from an *emic* perspective in human cultures and at the same time maintains an *etic* perception of reality beyond the confines of any cultural system."

¹¹ Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 332–333. Osborne writes, "The key to contextualization is to seek a true fusion of the horizons of both the biblical text and the modern situation. This involves primarily a fusion of contexts, that behind the ancient text and that faced in the current context . . . I will switch from the original language and receptor language to original context (OC) and receptor context (RC) . . . There are two aspects of biblical (original) context, the sociocultural situation behind the passage (discovered via background research) and the literary context that contains the passage (discovered via exegetical research). [What this author refers to as the grammatical-historical hermeneutic.] Both are essential. The cultural context determines the sphere of modern life addressed by the passage; the literary context determines the message addressed to the modern context. *The interpreter must seek a consistent and significant overlap between the original and receptor contexts before true contextualization can occur.* Failure at either level will result in an improper, if not false, contextualization that can have serious consequences. At the missiological level it will produce a syncretized religion that is only half Christian (called "christopaganism"), similar to that produced at Colossae or Ephesus (see Colossians, the Pastoral Epistles or 1 John) . . . Good contextualization is just as important as good exegesis in hermeneutics, since interpretation includes praxis as well as theoria. If the proper task of translation and exegesis is to ask how the original author would say it (that is, the truth presented in the passage) if he were speaking to my audience, the task of contextualization is to determine "how what was asked of the original audience (what the author asked them to do) can be relived by my audience" (brackets and emphasis added). See also Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 17. They write, "On this one thing, however, there must surely be agreement. *A text cannot mean what it never meant.* Or to put that in a positive way, the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first spoken. This is the starting point" (Italics original).

and doctrines when missionaries communicate into the *emic* understandings of various cultures and languages.

This author affirms that there is only one true meaning of any text of Scripture.¹² Missionaries must first discover the original meaning of Scripture through grammatical-historical hermeneutics.¹³ The missionary must ensure that God's truth is expressed across cultures into a new context without losing, changing, or compromising its original textual meaning.¹⁴ The

¹² Biblical conservatives rightly seek to find the single meaning of any given text of Scripture. Norman L. Geisler, *Summit II Hermeneutics: Understanding God's Word, A Commentary* (Oakland, California: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983), 30. See also "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," With Commentary by Norman Geisler, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, Article VII. Geisler states, "WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed." Also Article XVIII, stating, "WE AFFIRM that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words."

¹³ See "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," with Commentary by Norman Geisler, Article XV. Geisler states, "WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text. WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support."

¹⁴ To be clear, in this treatment the author is not necessarily focused on *translation* of Scripture into writing but rather is proposing an overall philosophy by which all attempts at cross-cultural missionary communication (written, spoken, illustrative, metaphorical application, graphics, music, art, etc.) may be brought under the concept of biblical contextualization, under the control of Scripture. For instance, in one situation witnessed by the author, a missionary attempted to represent Jesus to Buddhist people in Southeast Asia using a hand-drawn picture that closely resembled in all other cultural ways a Buddha, but with nail prints in the hands and a wound in its side. This would not be biblical contextualization because we have no warrant to misrepresent the Jesus of the Bible in the image of a Buddha. Such a misrepresentation would be syncretism. See "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>, Article XVIII stating, "WE DENY the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship." See "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," with Commentary by Norman Geisler, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, Articles XI and XII. Article XI *affirms* that, "translations of the text of Scripture can

missionary cannot alter God's Word to fit the context, but is charged with bringing all cultural expression under the definitional meaning and control of the Word of God.¹⁵

In order to ensure no loss in biblical meaning when communicating cross-culturally, this author proposes a model, represented by an archer shooting an arrow at a target. The Archer Framework illustrates the inter-relationships between God's Word, the missionary, and contextualization to the nations, displaying the necessary process in order to achieve biblical contextualization.

The process must begin with the meaning of the Word of God itself (Principle 1), consider how those meanings are *emic*ally communicated within the target culture (Principle 2), and then work to align the *emic* meaning to the biblical meaning so that God's truth is communicated into another context without compromise (Principle 3). The bow and the arrow represent God's truth in Scripture, either the whole of Scripture or any part, especially the gospel itself (Ps 119:160; John 17:17; Col 1:5). We cannot change God's truth, and yet it is something that must be sent out to all the nations (Matt 28:18–20; Luke 24:44–47). The missionary (represented by the archer) must communi-

communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries," and it *denies* "that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the cultural out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible." Article XII *affirms* "that in the task of translating the *Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed*" (emphasis added). Article XII *denies* "the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort biblical meaning in the process" (emphasis added).

¹⁵ For example, Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions*, 169. Hadaway warns that, "missionologists err when they suggest the god of Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism can be contextualized in the manner of the apostle Paul in Acts 17... identifying Krishna, Buddha, or Allah with the Unknown God presents problems because of these deities' questionable qualities." See also Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids,: Zondervan, 2007), 48. After a comparative analysis of the attributes of the God of the Bible and Allah of Islam, Tennent concludes, "we cannot help but recognize that those who follow the 'God of Muhammad' and those who follow the 'Father of Jesus' are in a state of profound discontinuity . . . I must conclude that the Father of Jesus is not the God of Muhammad."

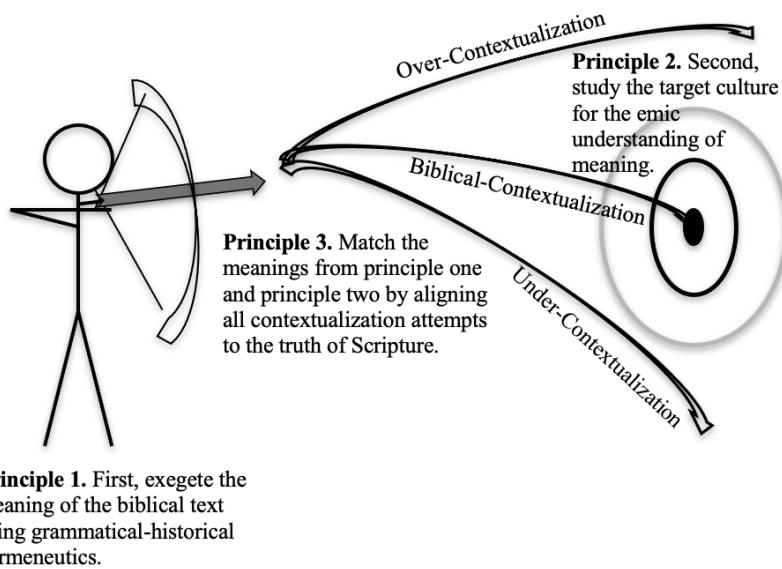


Figure 1: The Archer Framework

cate God's unchanging truth (represented by the arrow) to a certain people (or language, or tribe, or tongue, represented by the target). The archer is an "ambassador with bow."¹⁶ The target is not static but is ever-changing. The archer must be sure of his aim.

The distance between the missionary and the target nation (between the archer and the target) represents differences involving time, geography, worldview, culture, history, socio-economics, religion, politics, and language. All of these are elements that a missionary must navigate in order for the target nation to receive God's unchanging truth in a way they may understand it.

If the archer aims too high, he may miss the target. The upper flight path represents over-contextualization wherein errors of syncretism or various

¹⁶ Cory Gonyo, "Establishing Principles for Biblical Contextualization With Specific Application in Theravada and Folk Buddhism of Southeast Asia," 242–245.

forms of Christo-paganism may result.¹⁷ This approach goes beyond biblical contextualization, possibly forcing or twisting the biblical meaning to fit a cultural context thus losing the original meaning of the text.

The lower flight path represents under-contextualization, an aim that falls short of biblical contextualization. Communication will not be clear without enough consideration for the distance between God's eternal truth and the unreached nations of whom we must make disciples (Matt 28:18–20). If truth falls short when communicated, we will not make sense to them, and the message may not be received in a way that they can understand so that they may truly repent, believe in Jesus Christ, and be saved.

The arrow that hits the target represents a correctly aimed arrow that depends upon all necessary elements in the process. The missionary neither goes beyond what is written and revealed in Scripture (1 Cor 4:6), nor does he fall short of communicating the whole purpose of God to the receiving peoples (Acts 20:27). First, God's unchanging truth is discovered via exegesis and grammatical-historical hermeneutics. Second, aim, direction, and trajectory consider all concerns represented by the distance between the original meaning of the Word of God, the missionary's own culture, and the *emic* meaning contextualized to any target nation today. Lastly, God's truth is communicated across the distance without any loss of original meaning in a way that the receiving culture understands that meaning and is able to know the truth of Scripture and correctly respond. Contextual meanings are made to align (through clear explanation, teaching, or defining) with God's unchanging truth.

The goal in missionary communication is that the eternal truth of God in Scripture (the arrow) impacts every nation, tribe, and tongue (the target) so

¹⁷ See Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 267. Hiebert states, "To say that there is no biblical worldview is also to say that conversion to Christ is essentially a change in behavior and rituals or of beliefs and attitudes. The history of missions shows us that conversion on these levels is not enough. If worldviews are not also converted, in time they distort the explicit message of the gospel and turn Christianity into Christo-paganism. The behavior and beliefs are Christian, but the underlying assumptions, categories, and logic are pagan."

that they may repent and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and become His disciples. If any part of the Archer Framework is incomplete or otherwise left out, the arrow will simply not hit the target. It is an irreducible system, not only in archery, but also in cross-cultural communication of God's Word.

A missionary consistently operating in this way will engage in the cross-cultural communication process via a minimum of the three cultures involved; the Bible culture (the Kingdom of God revealed in Scripture, represented by the bow and arrow), his own culture (the archer who is the slave or ambassador of God's Kingdom), and the respondent culture (the nations, the target, contextualized meaning).¹⁸ Only when the original meaning is discovered and maintained from the beginning to the end of the communication process will effective biblical contextualization take place. The missionary can anchor contextualization to the original meaning of the Scriptural text using the Archer Framework. God's Word remains the control in biblical contextualization, not the context of the receiving culture.

Conclusion: Testing Our Biblical Contextualization

The true test for the ministry of the Word must not be whether or not something is cultural (i.e., culturally relevant or appropriate) or practical (i.e., pragmatic or results-producing). The test must be whether or not something is true. Eckhard Schnabel writes:

Authentic biblical contextualization does not exploit a culture 'for the Church's own gain even as Christian faith is not about exploiting God for what we want.' . . . The utter uniqueness and holiness of the one true and living God render all attempts to overhaul and retool the news of Jesus the Messiah and Savior to

¹⁸ See Paul Hiebert's bi-cultural community concept in Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 231, and David Hesselgrave's Three-Culture Model of Missionary Communication Diagram in David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 108.

the preferences of secular or pagan audiences idolatrous . . . The one true and living God cannot be bought, he cannot be owned. Likewise, his Word cannot be bought.¹⁹

True biblical ministry is the powerful exaltation of the gospel and faithful preaching of the Word (2 Tim 4:1–4). The gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected is the all-sufficient power of God unto salvation for those who believe (1 Cor 1:18). Any manipulation of God’s Word in an effort to improve upon results only undermines what we believe concerning the all-sufficiency of God’s truth in Scripture holistically and the power of the gospel specifically. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first for the Jew and then for the Greek (Rom 1:16). We must avoid all attempts at refashioning the gospel in our efforts to reach the nations. Only in Jesus Christ will anyone be saved from their sin, for indeed Jesus is the only Savior of the World (Act 4:12; John 4:42).

The truth of Jesus must be contextualized to every nation, tribe, and tongue. Yet the Jesus we communicate to the nations must remain the true Jesus, the all-Sovereign Lord of all peoples, the Son of God in eternal trinitarian fellowship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He must be the same Jesus before whom every nation, even every man, woman, and child must give an account (Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10). Anything less than the true Jesus and the truth of Scripture will not suffice. The Archer Framework serves as a guard against error and a guide so that God’s unchanging truth is faithfully contextualized for every nation, tribe, and tongue.

¹⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2008), 449–450. Schnabel quotes Andrew F. Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 8; see also Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 156n1, recounting Allen’s concern that ill-educated congregations will sell themselves to the highest bidder in order to garner grants from whichever mission is willing to give them the most.

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