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THE THREE HORIZONS: CULTURE, INTEGRATION AND COMMUNICATION

David J. Hesselgrave*

Without doubt we are justified in conjecturing that, from the beginning, man as a communicator has entertained an awareness of the intimate relation that exists between meanings and contexts. At the same time we are probably also justified in saying that there has never been a time when greater consideration has been given to a delineation of contexts or to an examination of their influence on understanding. Let us briefly look at some contextual categories and exemplify some of the ways in which they are regarded by theorists, both secular and religious.

I. The Two Horizons of Interpretation: Textual and Interpretational Contexts

The metaphor is used by H. G. Gadamer and Anthony Thiselton. The "two horizons" refer to the context in which a Biblical text is discovered and the context by which an interpreter of the text is conditioned. Of course these two horizons relate to the interpretation of any text, not just the Biblical one, though the relationship may indeed be unique in the case of Biblical revelation. Let us look at these horizons separately.

1. *The textual context.* The context in which any message is encoded is of salutary importance to the determination of its meaning. This is so obvious that we run the risk of pedantry simply in mentioning the fact. And yet if we examine a few of the ways in which textual contexts have been characterized by writers, both secular and Christian, we may be in for some surprises.

Consider the "dramatistic" view of interpretation propounded by Kenneth Burke.[1] He says that all "rhetorical acts" must be analyzed in terms of a contextual "motive" that includes not just words and their arrangement, or even the immediate circumstances in which they were authored, but the totality of data bearing upon the words. This is to say, for example, that the context of Jesus' words to Nicodemus includes not just the language and the circumstances immediate and contiguous to that experience but also such seemingly remote data as that supplied by the Genesis record. In effect Burke has widened the classical notion of context so as to make it include a much larger purview.

*David Hesselgrave is professor of world missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

[1]K. Burke, *A Grammar of Motives and a Rhetoric of Motives* (Cleveland: World, 1962).

To take Burke seriously would challenge the breadth of vision and understanding of even the most astute interpreter.

I. A. Richards, on the other hand, occasions a somewhat different response.[2] For him the crucial contextual factor is the genre of the language being employed. He says that verbal messages can be categorized as being scientific, poetic or "mixed" (a combination of scientific and poetic). Scientific language is testable as to its truth or falsity. Poetic language, however, is emotive—that is, it conveys the feelings and dispositions of the author and attempts to arouse certain responses in auditors and readers. Truth and falsity in the testable, factual sense have nothing to do with it. Most contexts mix scientific and poetic language. The first task of the interpreter of a "mixed" text is to "unscramble" the literary types or genres. As for religious language all of it, says Richards, is poetic. Therefore if the context of any statement is religious, one need not expect that statement to convey any objective truth about the world. Thus Richards has infused literary genres with his particular epistemology and therefore comes to highly debatable conclusions.

Something parallel has occurred in Bible interpretation. Bible exegetes have always insisted upon an understanding of the historical as well as the grammatical contexts of any given text. And of course as that understanding has expanded it has had the effect of enlarging the context, though not to the degree Burke has suggested. An accompanying and growing emphasis has also been placed on the nature of Biblical language and revelation as aspects of the textual context, especially in recent years. This emphasis often goes far beyond the classical concern for literary genres.

Take by way of example the approach of anthropologist-missiologist Charles H. Kraft,[3] who seeks to press beyond the traditional grammatico-historical interpretation of the Biblical text to what he calls an ethnolinguistic understanding. Concerning this he writes:

> This approach attempts to see more deeply into language and culture both at the biblical end and with respect to their influence on the interpreter himself. We may refer to this approach as "ethnolinguistic" (i.e., "culturo-linguistic") hermeneutics or even as "ethnohermeneutics." The "context" of which we speak is not simply the literary or even the linguistic context in which an utterance occurs . . .; *it is the total cultural context* (including both literary and extra-literary components). And we focus not only on the central message of the Scriptures as expressed in the original linguistic and cultural vehicles (as important as that is), but also on the total process by means of which God seeks to communicate that and numerous other messages (both then and now) via language and culture. This approach, in keeping with the aims of biblical theology, emphasizes the pervasive importance of the cultural context but add [*sic*] considerations of process to those related to the product (the Scriptures).[4]

Kraft's approach is both stimulating and somewhat overwhelming. To un-

[2]I. A. Richards, *A Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University, 1936).

[3]C. H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979).

[4]Ibid., p. 135.

derstand both the "total process by which God seeks to communicate" and "the total cultural context" of any given text does indeed require more knowledge than any historian or linguist may possess (as Kraft rightly insists). It also requires more than any anthropologist possesses (a proposition that Kraft might do well to take more seriously). In any case, Kraft has adopted a revelational epistemology that mightily influences his hermeneutic.

2. *The interpreter's context.* From time immemorial many scholars have recognized the influence of the interpreter's cultural conditioning. Various of the Church fathers, for example, were trained rhetoricians. Some of them, such as Justin Martyr and Augustine of Hippo, were most sincere in asking themselves whether their (pagan) education and training could be used in the service of God. In *On Christian Doctrine*[5] (which is often considered to be the first manual on homiletics) Augustine poignantly asks this question in relation to the interpretation and exposition of the sacred Scriptures. With certain reservations he answers in the affirmative. Today we might be tempted to ask a further and different question: Would it have been possible for Augustine to completely divest himself of his training in approaching his text and task had his answer been negative? He does not appear to have faced that question. Nevertheless we applaud his sensitivity.

Recently, considerable attention has been given to these issues. The "new hermeneutic," for example, places a great deal of emphasis on the historical and cultural conditioning of the interpreter. Concerning this, Thiselton says:

> Traditionally hermeneutics entailed the formulation of rules for the understanding of an ancient text, especially in linguistic and historical terms. The interpreter was urged to begin with the language of the text, including its grammar, vocabulary, and style. He examined its linguistic, literary, and historical context. In other words, traditional hermeneutics began with the recognition that a text was conditioned by a given historical context. However, hermeneutics in the more recent sense of the term begins with the recognition that historical conditioning is two-sided: *the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition.*[6]

It turns out that the modern interpreter must free himself from some traditional understandings and approach the text in "new" ways.[7] For example, the new hermeneutic emphasizes the power of the Scripture text (*the* word) to effect change rather than to convey teaching. This is reminiscent of Zen Buddhism. According to Zen the seeker after enlightenment needs to transcend traditional thought processes and make his mind a "holy vacuity." In the forms of paradox, contradiction, repetition, affirmation and other contrivances, words can then become "verbal devices" to trigger the enlightenment experience. (The famous Japanese *koan*, which are statements without rational explanation, and *mondo*, which are dialogues presenting unanswerable problems, come un-

[5]Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (New York: Liberal Arts, 1958).

[6]A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 11.

[7]Ibid., pp. 335–342.

der the category of "verbal devices.") Little wonder, then, that the later Heidegger, grounding language in Being rather than in human thought as he did, expressed appreciation upon reading the Zenist D. T. Suzuki and is reported to have said, "This is what I have been trying to say in my writings."[8]

The upshot of this and other emphases in the approaches of men like Heidegger, Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebeling and H. G. Gadamer is that one must come to the text of Scripture armed with a new understanding of language (especially religious language); with an attitude of selective, reflective listening; and with new "nearness" and "distancing" that will result in a sort of "fusion of the two horizons"—that of the text and that of the interpreter. Here again we see that which is insightful and helpful, but there is solid ground for the fear that in this approach the meaning that one brings to the text may still eclipse the meaning that is inherent in the text.

In sum, the linguistic genre, the historical and cultural background, and the immediate textual setting, on the one hand, and the conditioning, tradition, pre-understandings and sensitivities of the interpreter on the other—all bear upon interpretation.

II. The Two Horizons of Gospel Communication: The Missionary's Context and the Respondent's Context

Just as two contextual horizons relate to interpretation of Scripture, so two contextual horizons relate to the communication of any message, including the communication of the gospel—namely, those of the encoding source and of the decoding respondents.

1. *The context of the missionary communicator.* We might infer from what we have said about interpreters that, in general, what is true concerning the interpreter and his historical context and tradition must also be true of the communicator and his historical context and tradition. That inference may or may not be correct. Even the same person, now an interpreter and then an expositor, may well bring some radically different characteristics to the two closely related but very distinct tasks. For example, as a result of parentage, upbringing and training the same individual may bring a high view of the Biblical text and its setting to the interpretational task while bringing a low view of his respondents, their culture and their condition to the expositional task. Or he may possess the razor-sharp linguistic skills so essential to the task of interpretation and lack the relational skills so important to communication. To speak in specifically missionary terms, a theological giant may prove to be a cultural pygmy.

Of course the opposite case is also possible. As a result of his experience and training a person may become so attuned to his audience (respondents), their needs and ways of thinking that he does violence to the text in accommodating his hearers.

There would be some justification, therefore, for speaking of four horizons,

[8]Ibid., pp. 341–342.

differentiating between the horizons of the interpreter of the text and the "explainer" of the interpreted message. For reasons of practicality and simplicity, however, we will think of the interpreter and communicator as being one and the same person with consistent and complementary approaches to hermeneutics and communication. In that case we are justified in speaking of only three horizons (the context of respondents constituting the third horizon). (The foregoing was written before Harvie Conn employed the term "third horizon" in his 1984 book, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds*.)

2. *The context of the respondents.* Pick up any good college textbook on speech or communication theory and you will find the kind of emphasis on audience and audience context that prompted Aristotle to write to the effect that it is easy to praise Athenians when one is among Athenians. It is patently obvious that audience (respondent) context is of great importance to communication.

If modern communicators share Aristotle's insight, however, they also tend to share his myopia. Most theorists and practitioners confine their considerations of context to the variegated circumstances and audiences of their own culture. Or, if they go beyond this, they universalize and assume that circumstances and audiences are basically the same all around the world. Certain theorists, however, have pushed hard against these walls of ethnocentrism that tend to imprison us ideologically and practically.

Until recently professor of speech communications at the University of Pennsylvania, Robert Oliver was once engaged by the United States government to study communication problems in Korea. His conclusions are found in various writings, notably *Culture and Communication*[9] and *Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China.*[10] It is highly interesting that Oliver's point of departure is world view. He explains the impact of Communist, Confucianist, Taoist and Hindu-Buddhist world views on communication. And he insists that, apart from a careful consideration of these religious and cultural contexts, misunderstandings and miscommunication with peoples of these world-view orbits will continue to be the norm.

John C. Condon has had a background in several cultures, is one of an increasing number of scholars who has a doctorate in intercultural communication, and is presently serving on the faculty of International Christian University in Tokyo. Condon approaches communication from what I choose to call an eclectic perspective. As far as I am able to discern he does not have a "formula" similar to Burke's "dramatistic pentad," nor does he concentrate on an overarching orientation such as world view. Instead he emphasizes the various disciplines that are concerned with culture and says, for example, that his "patterns of communication" are much the same as the anthropologist's "culture patterns." What is involved is a point of view and a context.[11] Thus Condon

[9]R. T. Oliver, *Culture and Communication* (Springfield: C. C. Thomas, 1962).

[10]R. T. Oliver, *Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China* (Syracuse: University Press, 1971).

[11]J. C. Condon and F. S. Yousef, *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974) 4.

is not so much concerned with somewhat artificial boundaries between academic disciplines but draws upon various disciplines in order to aid interpretation and communication within the contexts of other cultures.

The Christian missionary enterprise has in most eras been blessed with some men and women who have seen the importance of the cultural contexts of their respondents. Walk through mission history and become acquainted again with the likes of Raymond Lull and Matteo Ricci. Visit Halle-trained Bartholomew Ziegenbalg in eighteenth-century India. And revisit the Serampore trio—Carey, Ward and Marshman—in the India of the nineteenth century. Concerning the latter threesome, Stephen Neill writes:

> Carey and his colleagues held strong views as to the exclusive faith; the religions of the heathen were delusions of the devil. Yet they saw clearly that the missionary must understand not only the language but also the thought-world of those to whom the Gospel is to be preached. Carey's Sanskrit grammar, a beautifully printed work of one thousand pages, was a memorable contribution. The time spent in the translation of the Ramayana into English was criticized by friends of the mission but justified by Carey; and Ward's book on the manners and customs of the Hindus (1806) is one of the best and most sympathetic delineations of the world of Hindu thought ever produced by a foreigner.[12]

In recent times numerous scholars involved in the Christian mission to the world—Hendrick Kraemer, Eugene Nida, William Wonderly, Charles Kraft and many more—have come to grips with the significance of cultural contexts to cross-cultural communication. One is tempted to say that some of the most significant contributions to the relevant literature have been made by people characterized by Christian faith and purpose.

It is with reference to the contexts of respondents (particularly in the so-called third world) that it has been proposed that we "contextualize" the gospel and theology. In approaching this subject one recalls Leonard Doob's rebuke for the "sin" of attempting "to achieve academic immortality by plastering eye-catching neologisms or fancy phrases upon referents that already possess perfectly adequate symbols of their own."[13] Whether Doob's castigation is appropriate in this instance can be left for others to decide, but there can be no doubt that the term "contextualization" is ambiguous. Nevertheless it has great currency and linguistically encapsulates various attempts to accommodate "third horizon" orientations and concerns in Christian mission. That being the case, I would like to focus on some approaches to contextualization before drawing some conclusions and bringing this paper to a close.

III. Two Archetypal Approaches to Contextualization

Elsewhere I have attempted to place various understandings and approaches to contextualization on a continuum.[14] Here it may be sufficient to

[12]S. Neill, *Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 264.

[13]L. Doob, "The Inconclusive Struggles of Cross-Cultural Psychology," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 11 (March 1980) 68.

[14]D. J. Hesselgrave, "The Contextualization Continuum," *Gospel in Context* 2 (July 1979) 4–11.

deal with two archetypal understandings and relate them to what has already been said about the three horizons.

1. *An aberrant contextualizaion: "accommodational prophetism."* Both the beginnings and confusions of the term contextualization have been documented by Bruce C. E. Fleming,[15] who backgrounds the conciliar meaning of contextualization by referring to a 1971 Consultation of "Dogmatic or Contextual Theology?" that was held by the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches at Bossey, Switzerland, and a circular letter sent out by Nikos A. Nissiotis, director of the Ecumenical Institute and chairman of the Consultation in advance of the session. In part, Nissiotis wrote:

> We consider the study of this question "Dogmatic or Contextual Theology?" to be necessary at the present time on account of the crisis which has arisen through the continued use of abstract principles and metaphysical presuppositions by some theoretical disciplines. It is evident that, in the realm of theology, this crisis would affect Systematic Theology more than any other disciplines. And Systematic Theology has indeed been largely affected by the changes which, due to the rise of a new technological society, have taken place in the world. The effect of the latter has been to lead to a kind of "contextual or experiential" theology which gives preference, as the point of departure for Systematic theological thinking, to the contemporary historical scene over against the biblical tradition and confessional statements constructed on the basis of biblical texts taken as a whole and thus used uncritically. At the same time the question is being raised today as to whether Systematic Theology can continue to take biblical texts as its point of departure and, on the basis of Biblical Theology, systematize the Christian Faith.[16]

Commenting on some key passages in the Theological Education Fund publication that came out of the Consultation (*Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund [1970-1977]*) Kosuke Koyama comments:

> The message I hear from these paragraphs is this: contextualization of theology is something more than taking the historical and cultural context seriously; it is letting theology speak in and through that context. This much is already a tall order indeed. The TEF concept of contextualization "seeks to press beyond" this. Theology must consist of critical accommodational-prophetism and prophetic accommodation. This is *authentic contextualization.* TEF theological reflection locates the ultimate moment of such authentic contextualization in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.[17]

Shoki Coe characterizes this kind of contextualization in the following way:

> In using the word *contextualization,* we try to convey all that is implied in the familiar term *indigenization,* yet seek to press beyond for a more dynamic concept

[15]B. C. E. Fleming, *Contextualization of Theology: An Evangelical Assessment* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1980).

[16]N. A. Nissiotis, Director of Ecumenical Institute of WCC, to participants in consultation on "Dogmatic or Contextual Theology?," dated October 1970; quoted in Fleming, *Contextualization* 6.

[17]K. Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974) 21.

which is open to change and which is also future oriented.

> Contextuality . . . is that critical assessment of what makes the context really significant in light of the *Missio Dei*. It is the missiological discernment of the signs of the times, seeing where God is at work and calling us to participate in it.
>
> Authentic contextuality leads to contextualization. . . . This dialectic between contextuality and contextualization indicates a new way of theologizing. It involves not only words, but actions.[18]

If one understands that the context that is being spoken of here is primarily that of the third world or particular cultures within the third world (and especially that of peoples who struggle for justice and freedom from oppression), the significance of contextualization in this understanding becomes quite clear in the light of these definitions and delineations. In contradistinction to dogmatic theology, which begins with sacred Scripture and directs its teachings to all people (including those of the third world), contextual theology (or at least this variety of it) begins with the contexts of respondent peoples, proceeds to establish "contextuality" (the significance of those contexts in terms of God's workings) and through a dialectical process develops a new theological formulation. Of course the method merits a more elaborate explanation, but I must leave that task to others. Our immediate concern is with the results. What are some of these new formulations? What is to be communicated to the peoples of the world? What do "prophetic accommodational" contextualizers offer, for example, to Asians? To Africans?

Choan-Seng Song, formerly of Taiwan and more recently associate director of the Commission of Faith and Order of the Word Council of Churches, says that redemptive history loses its significance for Asia because western theologians insist on interpreting the Bible from the perspective of the messianic hope lodged in the nation of Israel and carried forward by the Christian Church. He insists that the communities of faith in the Bible serve no more than a symbolic function as a result of their relation of God's purpose of redemption. Some corollaries and consequences of this understanding include the following:

First, the Bible must be interpreted existentially in terms of the experiences of the nations. A "theology of essence" must be replaced by a "theology of existence." Conceptual and propositional theology "can barely touch the heart of Asian humanity."[19]

Second, redemption must be understood as "the power which enables us to leap into the future and frees us from slavery to the sinful past and from an absurd fate."[20]

Third, the Christian interpretation of history must be tested and corrected

[18]S. Coe, "Contextual Theology," in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies* (ed. G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky; New York/Grand Rapids: Paulist/Eerdmans, 1976) 22.

[19]C.-S. Song, "From Israel to Asia: A Theological Leap," in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, p. 221.

[20]Ibid., pp. 213–214.

by non-Christian, or even anti-Christian, interpretations of history.[21] "Any Christian understanding of revelation and salvation which fails to give adequate account of the ways in which God has worked positively through the indigenous faiths and ideologies in Asia, is woefully inadequate."[22] The question is not "What is God doing through the Church?" but "What is God doing in the world?"

Finally, in relation to a concrete case such as modern China, we must redefine our Christian mission: "An understanding of Christian mission in terms of evangelizing and converting pagans and bringing them into the fold of the church is irrelevant in the context of modern China."[23] Choan-Seng Song himself is not altogether clear as to what is involved. But as for theology, it must "discern the seed of divine violence in the midst of human violence."[24] As for mission, it must "enable Christians to turn human violence of despair and death into divine violence of hope and life."[25] If the Christian message is to be heard in China and the rest of Asia, the claim to universal validity must give way to the need for situational "authenticity."

Canaan Banana, a Methodist leader of the black nationalist movement in Zimbabwe, studied at the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., in the middle 1970s and published some of his writings,[26] which illustrate this type of contextualization and represent

> an attempt to interpret the Christian message within the context of the experience of those who are victims of a hostile society. . . . It affirms the need for the ghetto masses to become co-partners with God in His divine mission of moral, economic, political and social revolution.[27]

The following adaptation of "The Lord's Prayer" is to be found in the above book and is reprinted in *Mission Trends No. 3*.[28]

> Our Father who art in the ghetto,
> Degraded is your name,
> Thy servitude abounds,
> Thy will is mocked,
> As pie in the sky.
>
> Teach us to demand

[21]Ibid., p. 217.

[22]Ibid., p. 219.

[23]Ibid., p. 220.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]C. Banana, *The Gospel According to the Ghetto.*

[27]C. Banana, "The Lord's Prayer—in the Ghetto," in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, p. 156.

[28]Ibid., pp. 156–157.

Our share of gold,
Forgive us for our docility,
As we demand our share of justice.
Lead us not into complicity,
Deliver us from our fears.

For ours is thy sovereignty,
The power and the liberation,
For ever and ever. Amen.

It is apparent that theologians like Banana and Choan-Seng Song are well acquainted with contemporary currents in western theology as well as the traditions of their own cultures. The result, from an evangelical point of view, is a very unhappy variety of contextualization—an aberrant, not an authentic, contextualization. Few would be prepared to argue that this approach to contextualization does not result in a message that has a great deal of "information" (in the technical sense of dynamic impact) in the respondent cultures. But it is nevertheless aberrant because the Biblical message has been lost in the contextualization process. The "third horizon" of the respondent has almost totally eclipsed the "first horizon" of the text.

2. *An authentic contexualization: "accommodational apostolicity."* At the other end of the contextualization continuum one finds an evangelical understanding of contextualization such as that of Bruce Nicholls:

> The translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the Kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situations.[29]

Or, as he expresses it elsewhere:

> A Theology of Gospel and Culture is an exercise in contextualization. To be valid and relevant contextualization is a missiological task of communicating the Gospel to individuals, families and communities each in their own cultural context.[30]

I have called evangelical approaches such as Nicholls' "apostolic accommodation" and have been criticized for using the term "accommodation."[31] Perhaps the designation "apostolic adaptation" would be better. In any case, the primary emphasis in an evangelical approach is upon conveying the received message of Scripture into the context of a respondent culture rather than upon somehow perceiving the constructing of a "relevant message" within the "contextuality" (Coe's term) of the respondent culture context.

It is evident that contextualization must not be confined to verbal communication of the Christian gospel. Nonverbal forms of communication such as art, architecture, music and lifestyle also require contextualization. Here, then,

[29]B. J. Nicholls, "Theological Education Evangelization," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (ed. J. D. Douglas; Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975) 647.

[30]B. Nicholls, "Crucial Questions in a Theology of Gospel and Culture," *Theological News* 10 (March 1978) 1.

[31]Hesselgrave, "Contextualization" 5; see also responses, pp. 12–22, especially by J. Gration, p. 15, and the author's rebuttal.

we would part company with at least the first definition of Nicholls as quoted above. The Bible itself being the Word of God written, however, it remains true that the written and spoken communication of that Word into forms "meaningful to the peoples in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situations" constitutes the primary task of apostolic and authentic contextualization. The basic questions in Christianity have to do with what God has done and said. And the basic questions in missionizing have to do with communicating the message of what he has done and said—with making that message "meaning-full" in other cultures.

One only has to consult the writings and review the labors of the Church fathers and missionaries whom we mentioned previously to find illustrations of this approach to contextualization. In fact, one need only review the details of the missionary ministries and the writings of the apostles themselves to find examples of an authentic contextualization that preserves the "unchanging content of the Gospel" while translating it into "verbal forms meaningful to the peoples in their . . . cultures and . . . existential situations." That contemporary theologians and missionaries alike need to make a critical assessment of the influence of their own "horizon," need to look seriously and sensitively to respondents and their "horizons," and need to do an increasingly effective job of relating Biblical truth to hurting people everywhere goes without saying. Moreover, it would be good for us and reassuring to people in the third world to confess that we have not always done well in this endeavor.

IV. Some Concluding Lessons

I would like to conclude by pointing out some important lessons to be learned in connection with the above considerations.

First, the danger inherent in the ecumenical understanding of contextualization as defined and illustrated above is analogous to that encountered in the new hermeneutic. Just as the second horizon of the interpreter's cultural conditioning and personal pre-understandings may be allowed to take precedence over the first horizon of the text (both for the academically prepared interpreter as well as the common reader) in interpretation, so in contextualization the predilections of the communicator (and theologian) vis-à-vis the third horizon or cultural context of the third world may well eclipse the Biblical message or distort it when the culture of the third horizon itself becomes the point of departure for theologizing and communicating the Christian message.

Second, authentic contextualization must find its starting point in a grammatico-historical analysis of the text itself. In attempting this the interpreter will be well aware of the limitations that impinge on all communication attempts. Theorists have debated numerous philosophical questions such as whether or not, or the extent to which, the text contains meanings that were not in the mind of the author. They have discussed the difficulty encountered by an interpreter (with his language structure and cultural conditioning) in getting to the meaning of a message framed in another language and cultural context. While admitting to the relevance of such problems I think that these difficulties are sometimes overdrawn. In any case, it is highly questionable that we will arrive at the message that God intended for man unless we begin

with the text of sacred Scripture, its language and its historical setting.

Third, by whatever name, the challenge to contextualization is justified. No thoughtful expatriate or national Christian worker should take this challenge lightly. The unstudied exportation of western systematic theologies, evangelistic methodologies, sermonic styles, lifestyles, church designs, and ecclesiastical organizations to the third world has been all too apparent. One might argue that in cases where the theologizer himself is a citizen of the third world (and the second and third horizons therefore coalesce) the case is completely different. Obviously contextualizations done from the emic perspective of third-world theologies is essential. That will not solve all the problems, however, as a review of the examples above will show. Third-world theologizers with whom I am acquainted have learned their theology in or from the west and in some ways are in no better position to avoid this pitfall than are their western counterparts. After studying cross-cultural communication at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, one dedicated foreign national leader confessed that he had been preaching western sermons to an oriental congregation for five years previous to matriculation. Hyperbole? Probably not. He had been discipled for Christ by western missionaries. He had studied theology and related subjects for three years in a graduate seminary in his own country using translated western texts almost exclusively. He had studied under national professors who themselves had their advanced degrees from western institutions and who demanded that their students know western theology while making few demands that they understand the pagan systems of their own country—of that cultural milieu in which they were preparing them to minister.

Fourth, it may be worth pointing out that evangelical understanding of contextualization as accommodation or adaptation of the received message of Scripture to people with their third-horizon cultural context is consonant with the theory and practice of both secular and Christian thinkers down through the centuries. It is also consonant with the etymology of the Latin word for context, which means "to weave" or "to join together." A message somehow conjured out of a cultural context is not necessarily authentic simply because it is evoked by a Christian. At the same time a Biblical message superimposed upon a culture without adaptation lacks meaning and therefore "authenticity *in situ*" even when well-intentioned. The Biblical message must be "woven" or "joined together" with third-horizon cultural materials.

With reference, then, to classical and more contemporary theories and practices in interpretation and communication we have witnessed a growing sensitivity to the importance of contexts—those of the text, the interpreter and/or communicator, and the respondent. A heightened awareness of the importance of the horizons of both the text and the interpreter has had a profound effect on hermeneutics resulting in, among other emphases, the "new hermeneutic." In similar fashion a heightened awareness of the importance of the horizons of both the communicator and the respondent has a profound effect on cross-cultural communication resulting in, among other emphases, the new concern for "contextualization." Contextualization in some form (not necessarily the word but the practice) is a natural outgrowth of taking increased cognizance of these horizons, particularly the "third horizon" or cultural matrix of respondents in the third world.