THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF VIRTUE FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS: INSIGHTS FROM LESSLIE NEWBIGIN AND PAUL HIEBERT

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I. INTRODUCTION

Houston, we have a problem. Disorientation has seized American evangelicalism and a safe landing is uncertain.[2] The convergence of multiple stress points[3] preceding and following 2020 revealed American evangelicalism is rich in material possessions but struggles with a poverty of theological depth. It abounds in political power but is too weak to provide strength to navigate the times with unity or clarity. The ability to nuance and provide a distinct Christian political vision that rises above the fray remains elusive. I do not state this as a judgmental outsider looking in, but as a pastor struggling with why the tradition within the Christianity I have served for over two decades appears not only ill-equipped for these days, but also a contributor to, and at times a source of, the dysfunction. At a minimum, wisdom calls for a long look in the mirror. Where did we go wrong?

Though my confidence in the church to be the primary means of God's redemptive and restorative work in the world is bruised, it is not shattered. Rather than retreat, I long to reflect. In this cultural moment, why does the church seem so ill-equipped? Why does the unity Christ calls his bride

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[2] For examples, see Michael Graham, "The Six Way Fracturing of Evangelicalism," *Mere Orthodoxy* (blog), June 7, 2021, https://mereorthodoxy.com/six-way-fracturing-evangelicalism/; Skyler Flowers and Michael Graham, "One Year Later: Reflecting on Evangelicalism's Six-Way Fracturing," *Mere Orthodoxy* (blog), July 12, 2022, https://mereorthodoxy.com/one-year-later-reflecting-on-evangelicalisms-six-way-fracturing/; Michael Barbaro, "The Pastor Being Driven Out by Trumpism," September 23, 2022 in *The Daily*, produced by The New York Times, podcast, MP3 audio, 44:09, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/23/podcasts/the-daily/evangelicals-trumpism.html; The Center for Pastor Theologians Conference, Reconstructing Evangelicalism (2022), https://www.cptconference.com/.

[3] At a minimum these stress points would include political turmoil associated with Donald Trump, responses to Covid-19, reckoning with narcissistic celebrity pastors, and a host of abuse allegations and scandals.

to seem as distant as Rivendell when walking through Mordor? Why are we so easily enticed with political power as Edmund was with Turkish Delight? Why do we tear one another apart in the public square? Why do we misrepresent fellow brothers and sisters by failing to put forth the best argument of those with whom we disagree? Why do we seem continually tossed about by cultural winds? Why is the gaining and maintaining of political power at all costs unapologetically justified? The answers to these questions are complex and beyond the scope of any single article, much less one I could write. However, that does not mean one cannot chip away at the complexity piece by piece.

My goal is to hopefully provide a small contribution to our larger task of reflection as pastors and church leaders as we seek a way forward. The hope is for a better way that leads us to equip congregations to faithfully bear witness to the kingdom of the risen Christ.[4] At the heart of the contribution I seek to offer is a haunting quote by Stanley Hauerwas in his "Introduction" to *A Community of Character*. He writes, "Any community and polity is known and should be judged by the kind of people it develops. The truest politics, therefore, is that concerned with the development of virtue."[5] A community is to be judged by the kind of people it develops. This is a piercing claim. If Hauerwas is correct, the validity of the worldview of a community is judged by the character or virtue that community forms within its members. The validity of the Christian faith is judged by the character of those who claim the name of Christ.

This naturally leads me to ask, as a pastor, what kind of people is the congregation I serve forming? Are we known for virtue? What about the evangelical church at large? Churches within my own tribe? What type of people make up our congregations? What is the place of virtue within these congregations? Honest answers to these questions should overflow into long reflection regarding what we can do better in our roles as shepherds. Honesty about our shortcomings and those of the church is not intended for despair but for resolve. Hauerwas rebukes, but he also exhorts, "That the church has often failed to be such a polity is without question, but the fact that we have often been less than we were meant to be should never be used as an excuse for shirking the task of being the people of God."[6]

In reflecting on our responsibility of being faithful witnesses to Christ during this this time of reorientation, the bodies of work belonging to Lesslie Newbigin (1909–98) and Paul Hiebert (1932–2007) continue to provide sources of wisdom and direction for engaging pastoral ministry and navigating the days before us. My hope is to share their wisdom. While neither of their work focused primarily on virtue formation within the church, their writing is rich with insight for guiding us to be a people "concerned with the development of virtue." In Newbigin, there is the

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[4] John 20:21; Acts 1:8.

[5] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 2.

[6] Hauerwas, *Community of Character*, 2.

constant cry regarding the missionary nature of the church combined with the realization that Christendom has fallen in the West. As for Hiebert, he pioneered the introduction of cultural anthropology into evangelical missiology in the American context. Though his early seminal works were first published in 1976[7] and 1985[8], they remain foundational texts for the integration of tools and insights of cultural anthropology in missiology. In this article, I will outline two broad points of significance for today from Newbigin's work followed by an overview of the relevant benefits of Hiebert's anthropological framework as it relates to virtue formation.

II. NEWBIGIN: CHRISTENDOM HAS FALLEN

Newbigin exhibited the rare combination of theological competence, missiological awareness, cultural insight, and pastoral sensitivity in his lifetime. At the heart of much of Newbigin's work is the conviction that the people of God, the church, find their primary identity as a missionary people and the renewal of Christianity in the West requires a missionary encounter between the church and Western culture. Newbigin's position is not simply that the church should be involved in missionary activity, but the very existence of the church is birthed out of and for God's mission. The church has not been given a mission, so much as the mission has been given to the church.[9]

This foundational understanding of the church's identity shaped much of Newbigin's writings. Significant amounts of his work are devoted to unpacking the argument for and implications of the missionary nature of the church.[10] Newbigin's primary focus was the unpacking of these missiological implications on the Western home front rather than international locations as was the tradition of Western missiology. The impetus for this was Newbigin's realization that Christendom had fallen in the West.

The reality of a fallen Christendom was foundational for Newbigin as he developed his understanding of the missionary nature of the church.[11] Though born in England, Newbigin was significantly influenced by his time serving the church in India which, from a Western perspective, was a natural missionary context. Upon his return to the United Kingdom, he realized his homeland was no less of a missionary context, though doctrines

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[7] Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976).

[8] Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985).

[9] For a full exploration of these themes in Newbigin's life and work, see Michael Goheen's *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018).

[10] See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) and Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

[11] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1953), 11.

of the church in the West continued to work from a posture "in which Christendom is taken for granted."[12]

Newbigin saw that the primary means for the church to faithfully engaging a post-Christian context was as a distinct community living out the truth of the biblical story. Though he does not specifically discuss virtue, it is assumed as part of his framework for how this community is distinct. He writes, "if it is really true that God has done what the Gospel tells us he has done . . . it must, it necessarily must become the starting point and the controlling reality of all thought, all action, and all hope."[13] This is a Christian vision for life that maintains its missionary nature only in the context of a community. For Newbigin, "The church affirms the truth of this story [the gospel story] by celebrating it, interpreting it, and enacting it in the life of the contemporary world." Furthermore, the call of the people of the church is, "to respond to a word of calling by believing and acting, specifically by becoming part of the community which is already committed to the service of the Builder."[14]

For Newbigin, the role of ethics, morality, and virtue—who we are and what we do—have significance in how they define and set apart the distinctiveness of the Christian faith within a cultural context. The Christian vision for life and living provides a radical contradiction to the "assumptions that we breathe" in our Western context.[15] The West does not live in light of the truth of the gospel story, contrary to the assumptions of many within the church at large. The life of the people of the church is a means by which the truth of the gospel story is shown to a culture living by another story. This life must include the presence of virtue consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

If Hauerwas is correct in asserting that a community is judged by the people it develops, understanding virtue within the context of a people with a missionary vocation has significant implications. The people that are formed within a community reveal something not only about that community, but the story by which that community lives. A current assessment of the evangelical community reveals a lack of virtue.[16] This assessment suggests one of two possibilities. First, the biblical story we claim as universal truth is only relative truth, or second, our professed governing story is not our

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[12] Newbigin, *Household of God*, 11.

[13] Lesslie Newbigin, "The Gospel and Modern Western Culture" (unpublished article), Newbigin Archives, University of Birmingham (n.d.), 13.

[14] Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (London: SPCK, 1995), 66.

[15] Lesslie Newbigin, "Evangelism in the City," *Reformed Review* 41 (1987): 4.

[16] This is evidenced in multiple ways. First, virtue as a concept is generally not addressed with great significance in American evangelical churches. Second, numerous public failings of well-known pastors point to a lack of virtue. Finally, the turmoil so many evangelical churches have experienced because of political divisions reveals a lack of the fruit of the Spirit. In countless conversations with pastors from around the country and various denominations within evangelicalism, the experience appears to be the same. This is not to suggest the evangelical community is devoid of virtue, but simply that virtue is needed more.

functional governing story. Either option is a problem. I am not ready to put aside the universal claims of the biblical story as mere personal preferences of truth. This leaves the need to address the second option.

Reflecting on Newbigin's work, Michael Goheen writes, "A missionary encounter is the clash between two comprehensive and religious visions of life that are to some degree incompatible."[17] The evangelical community does not have a shortage of clashes with the cultural left in America. The root of many clashes comes from a valid biblical critique of enlightenment and progressive assumptions regarding life and the world. The progressive political vision is not the biblical story and is deserving of critique. However, the lack of the distinctive presence of biblical virtue within the evangelical community is one of many signs that the functional story of our community is equally problematic. The alternative vision being offered by many evangelicals appears more at home in a shifting vision the Republican party has for America than a vision distinctly rooted in the lordship of Jesus.[18]

Newbigin knew a failure by the Western church to recognize its changing context, namely the dissolution of the synthesis of gospel and culture forged in medieval times, would lead in one of two directions. On one side is the danger of syncretism, which embraces the non-biblical cultural stories and their idols. On the other side, irrelevancy, with the danger of seeking a "refuge in a ghetto where their faith is not proclaimed as public truth for all."[19] Any attempt to return to Christendom requires syncretism: a marriage between the church and ruling power, a power that is in direct contradiction to allegiance to the sovereign rule of Jesus over all things.[20] Newbigin was clear throughout his writings, there can be no return to Christendom, nor should there be.[21]

Additionally, Newbigin did not mince words in his warning to the church regarding any attempt to return to Christendom by merging kingdoms. He writes, "The sacralizing of politics, the total identification of a political goal with the will of God, always unleashes demonic powers."[22] Observing from across the ocean the rise of the "Religious Right" in the

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[17] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 141.

[18] The recent rise of Christian Nationalism manifests in the Republican Party. See Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford, 2022) and Stephen Wolfe, *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2022). Additionally prominent evangelical leaders John MacArthur and Al Mohler equate true and faithful Christianity as voting for the Republican Party. See Mark Wingfield, "MacArthur says Trump called to support his defiance of COVID orders," *Baptist News Global*, August, 26, 2020, https://baptistnews.com/article/macarthur-says-trump-called-to-support-his-defiance-of-covid-orders/; and "Voting the wrong way makes Christians 'unfaithful' to God, Mohler says," *Baptist News Global*, September 19, 2022, https://baptistnews.com/article/voting-the-wrong-way-makes-christians-unfaithful-to-god-mohler-says/.

[19] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 115.

[20] This reality is one of multiple problems with various versions of Christian Nationalism that are gaining momentum on the political right in the United States.

[21] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 95–123.

[22] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 116.

United States in the 1980s and its association with political power, Newbigin declared, "This confusion of a particular and fallible set of political and moral judgements with the cause of Jesus Christ is more dangerous than the open rejection of the claim of Christ in Islam," because "it uses the name of Jesus to cover the absolute claims of one national tradition."[23] Newbigin's lingering wisdom for today is the realization that because Christendom has fallen in the West, the missionary nature of the church is essential for a missionary encounter between the church and the West. At the heart of this encounter is a distinct people living with an ethic under the political story of the kingdom of Jesus rather than any other political story. A failure to do this is to reject the missionary nature of the church and diminish the uniqueness of the biblical story. The result is a civil religion that is Christian in name only.

III. HIEBERT'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF HOW PEOPLE CHANGE

Answering the question of why the American evangelical church appears at times more captured by a distinctly American political vision for life over and against a distinctly Christian vision is multi-faceted and beyond the full ability of this article to address. However, as stated earlier, that does not mean an attempt to contribute to part of the answer cannot be made. As stated previously, one evidence of evangelicals functionally living by a different governing story other than Christ is the dearth of the presence of virtue within the evangelical community.

A strength of evangelicalism is its stated commitment to the truth of Scripture. Generally speaking, there is clarity on the importance of believing the correct things. God created the world. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and sinned. We follow their path as sinners. Sin deserves punishment because God is holy and just. God is love, and therefore, sent his Son Jesus to pay for our sin on the cross. Believe and trust Jesus died for your sins, and you can be forgiven. If you believe in these things, then you can escape judgment and have eternal life with Jesus. These statements are at the heart of so much of what evangelicals believe as a Christian community. Believe these things and you will be saved! Each of these statements can be supported in Scripture and contain truth from Scripture. However, in some ways, summary statements like this can unintentionally function as a reduction of Christianity to a set of logical propositions. As a result, Christianity ceases to be a compelling faith that guides all of life under the lordship of Christ and becomes merely a set of propositional statements to be affirmed.

Hiebert became aware of this problem, not by analyzing Western culture as Newbigin did, but by analyzing the Christianity that Western missionaries were exporting in the twentieth century in non-Christian and non-Western contexts. Hiebert describes the situation as follows:

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[23] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 116.

Protestant missionaries began to stress the need for transformations in people's beliefs. People had to believe in the deity, virgin birth, and death and resurrection of Christ to be saved. They had to repent inwardly of their sins and seek the salvation Christ was offering to those who believe. Right beliefs were seen as essential to Christian conversion, and missions set up Bible schools and seminaries to teach orthodox doctrine.[24]

In Hiebert's analysis, the results of this limited strategy are not encouraging,[25]

It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that transforming explicit beliefs is not enough to plant churches that are faithful to the gospel. People often say the same words but mean different things. Underlying explicit beliefs is a deeper culture that shapes the categories and logic which people think and view reality.[26]

The reason for the disconnect, according to Hiebert, is that *only* changing external religious beliefs does not bring about transformation. This is because the cognitive does not encompass the totality of the human experience. The failure to address the fullness of the human experience results in a "reinterpreted Christianity as a new and more powerful form of magic."[27] The sum of the Christian faith is not simply belief in the correct things. It is also doing the correct things and being the correct person. Hiebert's contribution to addressing this problem was published posthumously in *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*. In this work, Hiebert utilizes the framework of worldview within cultural anthropology to provide a more in-depth analysis of how people experience transformation. For Hiebert, this framework is essential to understanding and solving this problem at hand.

Conversion may include a change in beliefs and behavior, but if the worldview is not transformed, in the long run the gospel is subverted and the result is a syncretistic Christo-paganism, which has the form of Christianity but not its essence. Christianity becomes a new magic and a new, subtler form of idolatry.[28]

It is important to note that Hiebert uses worldview through the lenses of anthropology, which differs from the term's more philosophical origin. Worldview as a term originates from the German word *Weltanschauung* as used by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). It was first utilized in English

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[24] Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 11.

[25] Hiebert's reflection is not meant to suggest the absence of genuine transformative work by Protestant missionaries. The explosion of the church in the Global South over the past century is partially a result of faithful Protestant mission work. Hiebert, from his own experience and research as a missionary, is reflecting on a general weakness of Protestant missionary work.

[26] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 11.

[27] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 11.

[28] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 11.

in regard to the Christian faith by James Orr (1844–1913) and Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). As a concept, worldview was utilized by Orr and Kuyper in response to modernism's wholesale rejection of the Christian view of life and the universe.[29]

Hiebert's use of worldview, however, is rooted in the development of cultural studies within anthropology.[30] As the field of anthropology developed and cultures were studied more deeply, anthropologists discovered that "below the surface of speech and behavior are beliefs and values that generate what is said and done."[31] Various terms and frameworks[32] have been developed and utilized to give voice to the reality that "people live . . . in radically different conceptual worlds."[33] Despite some weaknesses with the term worldview, Hiebert argues it is the most helpful for providing a holistic understanding of people that can lead to an improved understanding of how to bring about transformation.

Hiebert defines worldview as the "fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives. Worldviews are what people in a community take as given realities, the maps they have of reality that they use for living."[34] Hiebert does not dismiss the importance of the cognitive, or belief in certain propositional truths. However, he argues it only represents one-third of what must be addressed in the process of one's transformation. The affective (emotions, feelings, etc.) and the evaluative (ethics, morality, virtue, etc.) must equally be addressed.

As the culmination of a lifetime of work, Hiebert's *Transforming Worldviews* is rich with insights that are beyond what can be fully explored here. For our purposes, focus will be directed at the evaluative aspect of Hiebert's worldview framework as it is the place for virtue within a person and culture.[35] Hiebert acknowledges that transformation begins with cognitive and affective conversions.[36] A person can learn they are a sinner in need of forgiveness and this forgiveness can be found in the work of Jesus Christ. This is a truth claim that can be cognitively affirmed and lead to real and meaningful joy and gratitude. When this happens, the process of transformation has started, but it is not complete. He writes, "Christians

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[29] This more philosophical use of worldview remains popular and useful through the works of Brian Walsh, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984); Al Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 5th ed., (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

[30] Hiebert acknowledges a weakness of the term "worldview" is in its primary philosophical origins.

[31] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 15.

[32] See Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 15, for an example of the various terms utilized within the field of anthropology.

[33] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 15.

[34] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 15.

[35] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 60.

[36] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 313.

are called not only to know the truth and experience beauty and joy but also to be holy people."[37]

Taking Hiebert's insights into the shortcomings of American missionary work in conjunction with the aforementioned observations about the current state of evangelicalism, part of our ailment as evangelicals is one of stunted transformation. The glaring weakness is not in doctrinal affirmations (cognitive)[38] or meaningful religious experiences (affective), but in a life of holiness, moral clarity, and virtue (evaluative). This is not to say there is no moral compass in the evangelical church. There is. The problem is that it is a moral compass marked more by a common civic religion from the days when Christendom reigned rather than a distinct moral vision rooted in the kingdom ethic of the resurrected Christ. To use Hiebert's language, it is a "syncretistic Christo-paganism, which has the form of Christianity but not its essence."[39] This could partially explain why there can be a large consensus around public issues regarding marriage and abortion among evangelicals, but little emphasis on the beatitudes or fruit of the Spirit.

If this analysis is correct, the remedy is not a devaluing of cognitive truth claims and religious experience as has been the path of some, but an increase of emphasis on formation that goes beyond the cognitive and affective and into the evaluative. This renewed emphasis must go beyond simply declaring, "You should be more virtuous," or more specifically, "You should be more self-controlled." There are two problems with simple exhortations to be more virtuous. First, what is and is not virtuous is culturally conditioned.[40] Second, even when there is agreement on what a virtue is, like kindness, there can be confusion or disagreement on what it means to be kind. Agreement on this cannot be assumed. Christendom has fallen. Competing cultural narratives supply differing views of what is true, good, and beautiful.

To navigate the cultural complexity of evaluative themes, Hiebert provides three frameworks to help discern how a social context functionally[41] understands what a virtuous life would look like. First, Hiebert provides the work of Robert Redfield regarding moral order. One example Redfield provides concerns how morality is viewed differently in group-oriented societies than in individual-oriented societies. In group-oriented societies emphasis is placed on relationships. Relationships form the basis of morality, and therefore, the breaking or damaging of a relationship is viewed as the most grievous transgression. Additionally, punishment in a group-oriented society is often centered around shunning and ostracism. Exclusion from the

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[37]   Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 313.

[38]   I am distinguishing here between affirmation and knowledge. The state of evangelical doctrinal knowledge is beyond the scope of this paper and is addressed by others.

[39]   Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 11.

[40]   Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 60–65; Hauerwas, *Community of Character*, 121–25.

[41]   I use "functionally" as a reminder of the constant struggle to see our stated belief regarding what is virtuous consistent with our functional belief of what is virtuous.

group is the highest form of punishment. Hiebert provides the following chart to illustrate the various manifestations of moral order among cultures.

IMAGES OF MORAL ORDER[42]

Focus	Legal order	Right relationships	Cleanliness
Sin	Breaking the law	Breaking relationships	Defilement
Response	Guilt	Shame	Repugnance
Salvation	Punishment, restore moral order	Forgiveness, reconciliation, restore relations	Washing, purification, restore cleanliness
Image	Righteousness	Shalom, peace	Holiness, purity
Example	United States	Japan	India

The second framework Hiebert provides is the category of heroes and villains. Just as every good story has a hero and villain, so does every culture. Based upon a culture's worldview, implicit understandings of what is good and evil, righteous and unrighteous, and pure and defiled are developed. These understandings are established and reaffirmed through cultural heroes and villains. In the American context, to be known is to be celebrated. This is manifested in multiple ways from the adoration of celebrities to the elevation of those with blue checks on their Twitter account.[43] The more a person is known the more weight and value she has. Judgment is often not based on the content of what is said, but who it is that said it. The more well-known the person, the more validity is given. This value is not shared among all cultures. Among the Mossi people in Burkina Faso, West Africa the validity of a view is not based on how well a person is known, but on the age and family lineage of a person. The words of the older are valued over the younger and the speech of the village chief carries final authority.[44]

Heroes can manifest in the design of city spaces as well. Hiebert comments, "North Americans have placed a high value on technology and material goods, and business is their central activity."[45] The result of these values are American skylines dominated by buildings reflecting these values. A small example of the changing dominant cultural narrative of America can be seen in downtown Cleveland, OH. The oldest building in the heart of Cleveland's downtown Public Square is the Old Stone Church, built in 1855. At one time it towered over any building in downtown Cleveland. However, today one can easily miss the historic church building even if

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[42] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 62.

[43] At the time of the submission of this article Twitter still exists. I cannot predicate its state of existence for the time of publication.

[44] This example is taken from my own experience as a missionary in Burkina Faso.

[45] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 62.

you are walking in Public Square as it is overshadowed by skyscrapers representing a more modern moral vision for the city.[46]

Third, Hiebert adapts Talcott Parsons' moral dimensions framework. Parsons argues every society has these seven dimensions expressed on a continuum. This is not to suggest that the opposite of what is primary cannot be found, but that each culture gravitates to one end of the spectrum.

EVALUATIVE NORMS AT THE WORLDVIEW LEVEL[47]

Emotional Expression - Seek gratification of senses and desires - Permissive - Examples: Kwakiutl, modern consumer culture, tantricism	vs.	**Emotional Control** - Delayed gratification, renunciation - Disciplinary - Examples: Hopi, Protestant ethic, monasticism
Group Centered - Collective interests - Corporate responsibility and decisions - Examples: Bunyoro, tribalism	vs.	**Individual Centered** - Individual interests - Personal fulfillment and decisions - Examples: Kapauku, modernity
Other-World Oriented - Stress other-worldly gain - Examples: Medieval Europe, Buddhism	vs.	**This-World Oriented** - Stress this-worldly gain - Examples: modernity, post-modernity
Emphasize Ascription - Relatinos based on one's birth - Value attributes - Examples: caste system in India	vs.	**Emphasize Achievement** - Relations based on one's achievements - Value performance - Example: class system in United States
Focus on Whole Picture - Take broad context into account - Example: Indian village *panchayat* cases	vs.	**Look at Specific Details** - Take only narrow context into account - Example: U.S. court cases
Universalist - Treat everyone alike - Stress universal truths, laws, grids - Universal, absolute theories - Absolute ethics - Examples: Judeo-Christianity, modernity	vs.	**Particularist** - Treat each person on basis of his or her ascribed role, status, and situation - Stress uniqueness of each situation - Value uniqueness and diversity - Adaptation to situational context - Situational ethics - Examples: Hinduism, post-modernity

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[46] This is a vision primarily dominated by banking and finance.

[47] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 64.

Hierarchy is Right	vs.	Equality is Right
- See people intrinsically unequal - Give privileges to the superior - Patron-client relationship - Example: Indian caste society		- See people as intrinsically equal - Hold everyone equal in rewards/ punishment - Contractual relationships - Example: Scandinavian societies

The benefit of these anthropological frameworks is they highlight the diversity of views regarding evaluative themes present within a culture at any given time. As we consider the reality of pastoring in a post-Christian context, awareness of what evaluative themes already exist is essential for intentional virtue formation. Biblical virtue formation cannot take place without an awareness of competing visions for what is virtuous in a society. An analysis of the diversity of moral visions possible within a cultural context shows that many are easy bridges to the gospel and a life under Christ. The examples provided in the "Images of Moral Order" are themes identified in Scripture and are present to some degree in every culture.

In light of this, one role of the pastor in teaching, preaching, and shepherding is to seek discernment to recognize which existing evaluative themes are deficient, which are idolatrous, which need to be subservient to others, which need to be reformed in light of the gospel, etc. This is not an easy process and requires an awareness of how to discern which evaluative themes are rooted in Scripture and which are simply cultural idols. For example, one evaluative theme within American evangelical culture is freedom. An example of cultural heroes representing this theme are those serving in the military. Generally speaking, military personnel are highly regarded in the evangelical community as those who protect the freedoms we have. Having lived extensively in multiple contexts outside of the United States, I am thankful for the freedoms and rights I enjoy as an American citizen and for the service of our military personnel. However, the question for us as Christians and pastors is how does the American concept of freedom fit within the biblical story? Why is answering this question essential to virtue formation? Themes of freedom exist within the American story and the biblical story. If freedom, as popularly understood in the American story, is a one-to-one correlation with freedom within the biblical story, then biblical virtue requires courage (among other things) to defend it at all costs. However, if it is not a one-to-one correlation with freedom in the biblical story, then biblical virtue requires patience (among other things) if it is threatened.

IV. CONCLUSION

Freedom in the American story and freedom in the biblical story, though overlapping in some areas, are in many ways singing two different songs. The American song celebrates personal autonomy and rights. At the core is the right to pursue one's happiness however one may define happiness, regardless of the well-being of the collective whole. The happiness

of the self is paramount. The biblical song counters with a concept of freedom that is found in the unshackling of bondage to sin and the rest that comes in refuge in Christ following this unshackling. It is a freedom that unleashes one to pursue the good of others for the good of a greater kingdom. It is the freedom to serve and sacrifice for the other rather than elevate the self. How one defines freedom influences the virtue that is called for. An authentic Christian faith will bear the fruit of biblical virtue. A syncretistic Christian faith will bear the fruit of pseudo-virtue. Pseudo-virtue is the servant of idolatrous cultural stories; Christian virtue is the fruit of the biblical story. As pastors, we must know our cultural story to ensure the clarity of the biblical story. This requires an acknowledgment that Christendom has fallen in the West and a missionary encounter is now essential for the renewal of Christianity.

I do not know what the future of evangelicalism holds. I know I have a charge to faithfully shepherd the congregation I serve to be a distinct missionary community that points others to the beauty of Jesus's kingdom. This distinctness is not only brought about by believing and feeling the right things, but also by *being* the right people. Newbigin and Hiebert do not provide all the answers to what ails us, but their works are pieces of light that make the night a little less dark.