Forming Agents of Shalom

Holistic Teacher Formation for Shalom-Seeking Citizenship in a Fragmented Society





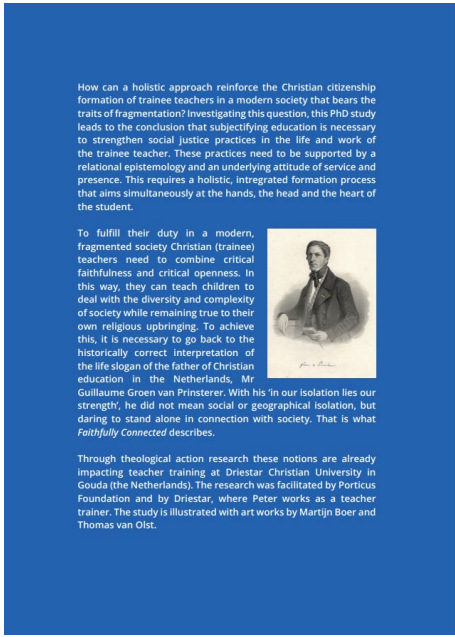
PhD Study Peter van Olst (DCU)

Driestar Christian University for Teacher Education

- Theological Action Research for DCU's teacher training curriculum
- How to prepare Christian teachers for shalom-seeking citizenship in a fragmented society?
- Holistic-Christian approach of teaching and teacher training
- Whole Teacher Development for citizenship from the Christian perspective







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Workshop Overview

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Christian education parts from a biblical worldview and is therefore critical about sin and brokenness in human cultures. Nevertheless, it never turns its back to the world or to society, but seeks to prepare students to be present in it. This causes a constant tension between the attitude of the pilgrim and the attitude of the citizen. A way to handle this tension in personhood formation activities is to strive towards shalom-seeking citizenship in which we enable students to be present as agents of shalom in a broken world that still remains fully God's.

1. The problem: Christian education in a non-Christian world
2. The ideal: Forming agents of Shalom
3. The model: Fostering Shalom-seeking Citizenship



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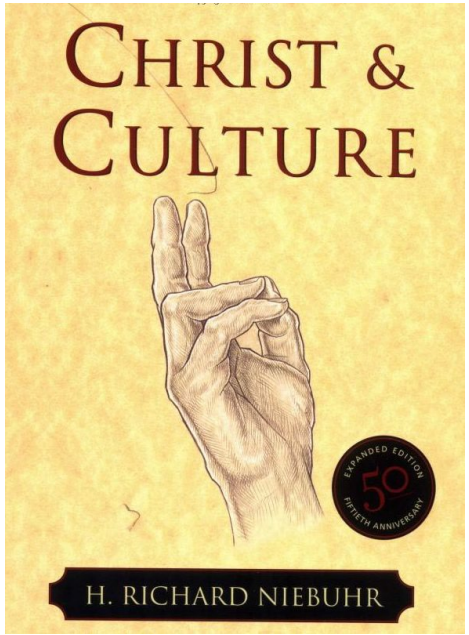
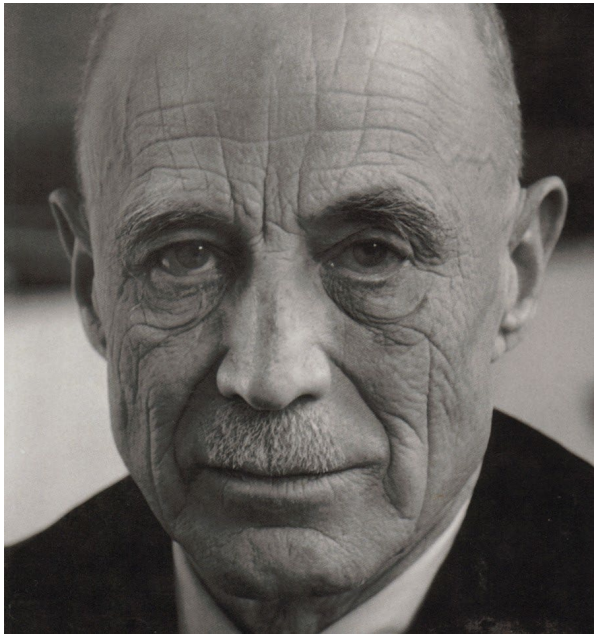




H. Richard Niebuhr

(1894 – 1962)

Five models for the relationship between Christianity and Culture

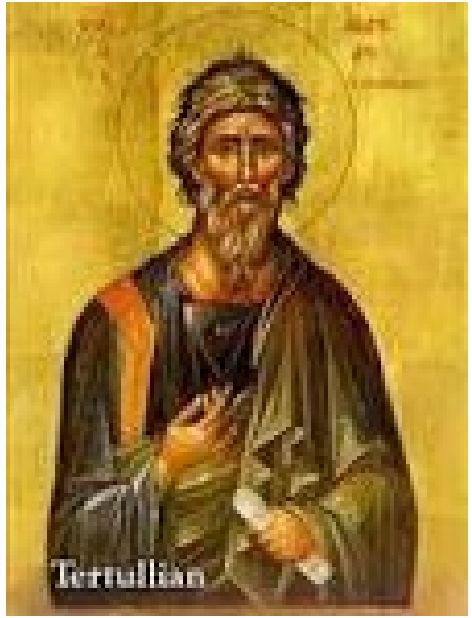
1. Christ against culture





Starting point: World = bad, evil, broken.
Effect: Monastic life (St. Benedict).
Recent example: Mennonites, Amish.

De cultu feminarum (197)
De spectaculis (200)
De corona militis (208)
De fuga en persecutione (209)



2. Christ of culture



Thinkers: Basilides, Valentine (Christian gnostics)
Starting point: Gnosis (Basilides), culture not evil, but divine.
Consequence: Cultural participation (accommodation).
Recent examples: Modern Western theology.



Thinkers: Clement of Alexandria, Thomas Aquinas
Starting point: Christ = *Kurios*, now and ever!
Consequence: Moderate cultural participation.
Recent example: RCC, evangelicals US.

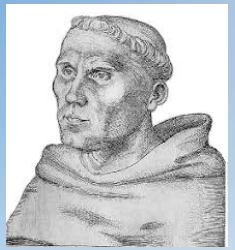
3. Christ above culture







Starting point: Ongoing conflict
Consequence: Stressful relation
Recent example: Refo pillar



4. Christ and culture in paradox

5. Christ, Transformer of culture

Thinkers:
Augustine, Calvin, Wesley, Edwards
Starting point:
Culture is not wrong, yet part of brokenness of the sinful world.
Recent example:
Missionary work



“Ye are the salt of the earth”

From openness to closedness; *where would you place yourself?*

Christ and Culture

Five Approaches to "Confronting the World"

"Culture" = Man's efforts to order the cosmos & define effective and correct ways to live in it.
The "Cultural Mandate" - Gen 1:27-28 - Man was "to cultivate" the Garden.

Christ against Culture	Christ and Culture in Paradox	Christ, Transformer of Culture	Christ above Culture	Christ of Culture
(Antithesis) **PROTECTING**	**(Duelism)** **UNCHANGING**	**(Conversion)** **INFLUENCING**	**(Synthesis)** **BATTLING**	**(Equates)** **ASSIMILATING**
Christians must make a radical break from their culture.	Christians live in the world, but oblivious to it - resting on tradition and faith while waiting for God's "kingdom".	Christians should endeavor to convert and redeem all man's cultural life for the glory of God.	Christians live in both "realms" and tries to either bring them together, or assert Christ's dominance over culture.	Christians find in Christ the high ideals for their cultural life and values.

These views see human culture as basically bad: sinful and evil -
tends to despise God's good Creation and confuse redemption with deliverance from worldliness and cultural practices.

Man's cultural pursuits are created good, but now infected by sin, so human culture needs redemption and restoration.

These views see human culture as basically (or partially) good -
tends to deny the full effects of the fall, and recreate Christ into various cultural images.

It is important to consider how each position views the doctrines of:

Creation, Fall, Redemption

(See H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture; Jimmy Long, Generating Hope, Chapter 1)

The ideal: Forming Agents of Shalom

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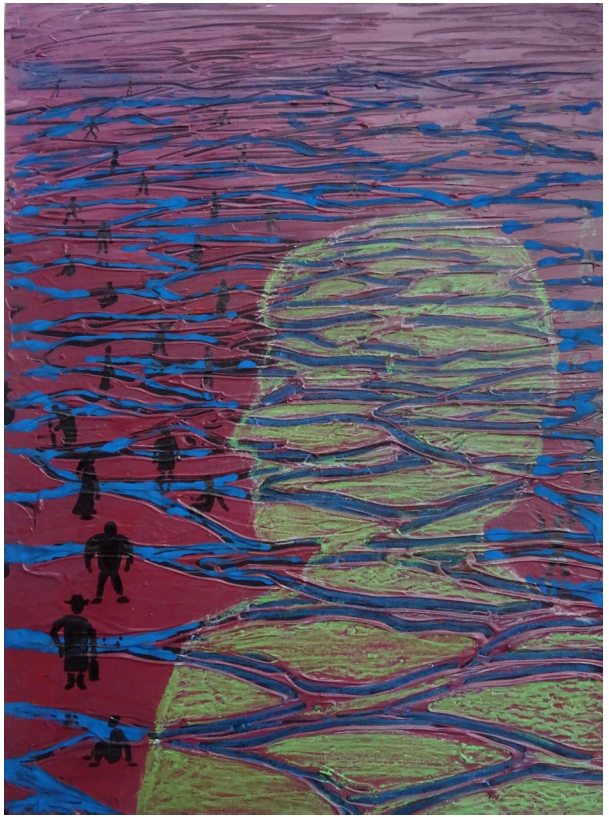
For what world we form students? Pluralistic, intercultural (+); post-Christian, secular (-); fragmented (!)

Alasdair MacIntyre (2007): lacking of 'a narrative unity of human life'

Intensification of sin (Kuyper): losing 'gift of grasping the true context, that proper cohesion, the systematic integration of all things'

Deep divides: abortion / the just war / freedom of choice vs accessibility in healthcare and education

Interpersonal, intrapersonal, national, global: paradox of citizenship (Clarkson, 2014)



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What about Subjectifying Education?

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Levinas (1969): otherness as a knock on the door of fragmentation

Wolterstorff (2004): educating for shalom; to be agents of shalom

Biesta (2015, 2022): worldcentred education as an invitation to respond (Aufforderung, subjectification)

From a *turn to the subject* towards *inviting the subject to turn back*

Shalom-seeking citizenship formation: *critical faithfulness* and *critical openness*



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Definitions and Frames

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- Citizenship = the art of living together (Prideaux, 1940)
- Citizenship education = the art of creating social cohesion by inviting students to connect – with each other, the community, society and the world – and to flourish within those connections
- Amidst super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007) and super-complexity (Barnett, 2000): the problem of fragmentation
- Parting from the classical function of the school as a 'halfway house' between the family and the society (Biesta, 2022)



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The model: Shalom-seeking Citizenship

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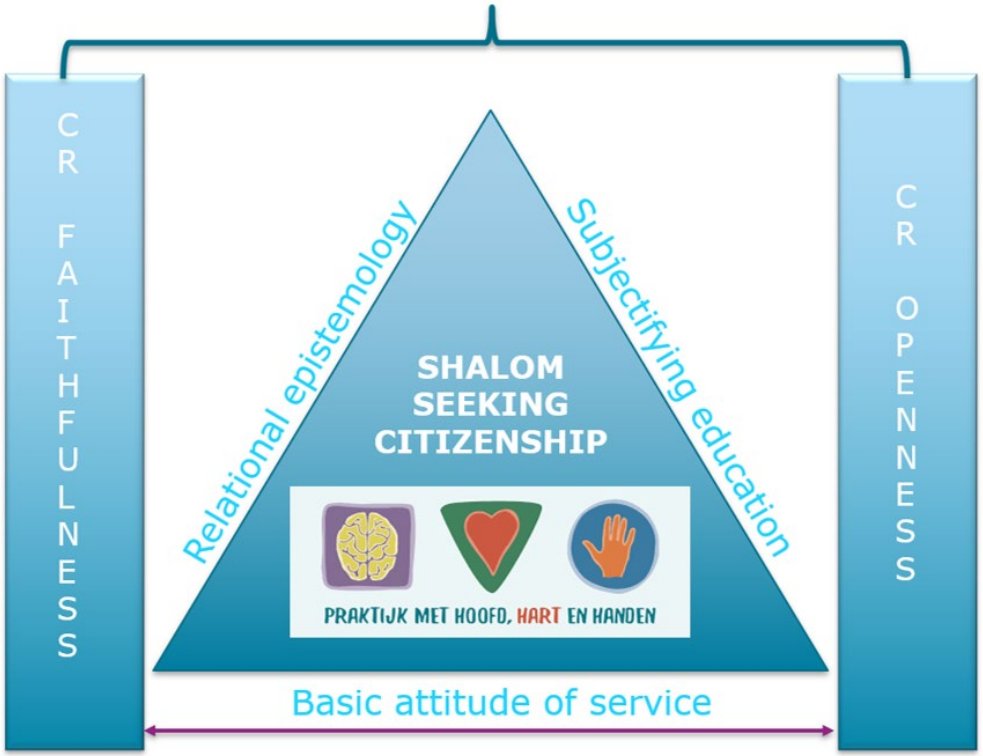

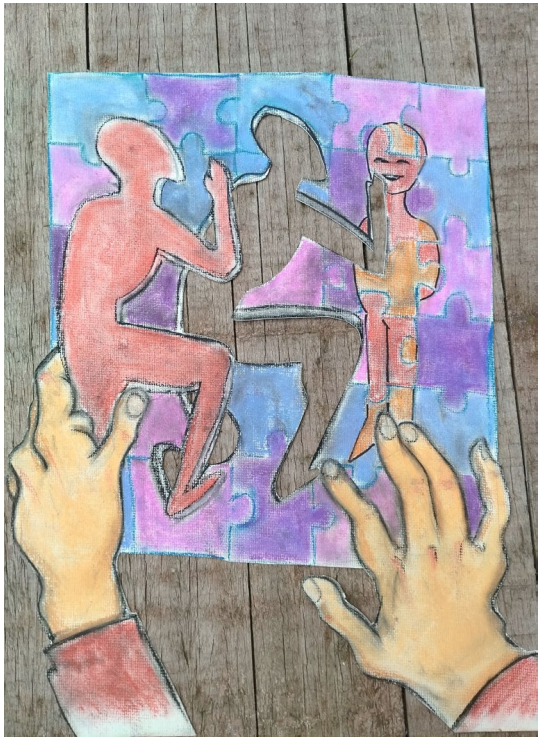

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