

The Topic of Discipleship in the Cape Town Commitment: Theological Review

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Abstract

The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action is one of the significant documents of evangelical Christianity that briefly addresses many important topics; one of such topics is discipleship. This article traces the theme of discipleship in the document and offers a theological reflection on the content and form of discipleship for contemporary evangelical Christianity. After the first part where the topic of discipleship is addressed, the article continues to offer a theological reflection on the topic of discipleship. Hence, the second part discusses the content and the form of discipleship. While the third part explains the importance of discipleship arguing that discipleship (Matthew 28) is the channel through which God realizes the return of the original creational blessing that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12. In the conclusion it is pointed out that if we want to take the topic of discipleship from The Cape Town Commitment seriously, the following is needed: a) to understand that discipleship is not an after-school or extracurricular activity but a channel through which God wants to spread his redemptive blessing to all nations; b) in our local churches and academic institutions we need to return teaching by example, because various church or educational activities are part of the discipleship but they are not a supplement for teaching by example; c) to redeem the term “Christian” in a way that this term is only used for those who are “disciples.”

Key words: *The Cape Town Commitment, disciple-talmid, teacher-rabbi, the Great Commission (Matthew 28), Abrahamic blessing (Genesis 12), teaching by example*

Introduction

The document, *The Cape Town Commitment*, contains numerous interesting and challenging topics and subtopics including discipleship. Until the conclusion, the term “discipleship” appears 11 times in the document and in total 17 times. That discipleship is considered something very important, which is evident from the following statements that appear in the conclusion of the document:

We sought to listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in his mercy, through his Holy Spirit, Christ spoke to his listening people. Through the many voices of Bible exposition, plenary addresses, and group discussion, two repeated themes were heard: The need for radical obedient discipleship, leading to maturity, to growth in depth as well as growth in numbers... (2011, 222). To fail in discipleship and disciple-making, is to fail at the most basic level of our mission (2011, 223).

Even though the need for “radical obedient discipleship” is strongly emphasized and discipleship is viewed as “the most basic level of our mission,” the document nowhere gives a description of what discipleship really means. Maybe in this form of document there was no place for something like a definition and thus it is assumed that the readers already understand discipleship.

Anyhow, the topic of discipleship is extremely important for evangelical Christianity and when we talk about it, we can talk about what discipleship *is* and *why* it is important. Although we should expect that the topic of discipleship is well known among evangelical Christians, I am afraid that this might not be the case. Therefore, in this article, we will first analyze the topic of discipleship within the document itself. Secondly, we will briefly explore what discipleship is in the light of the Bible, and after that our focus will be on the importance of discipleship within the context of the biblical story.

Discipleship in *The Cape Town Commitment*

By analyzing the document, we notice the following things about discipleship. First, as it was already mentioned, discipleship is viewed as the most basic level of our mission and as being like Christ, by taking up our cross, denying ourselves, and following him in the paths of humility, love, integrity, generosity, and servanthood and this is the way toward maturity and growth in numbers (2011, 223). Similarly, self-sacrifice and generous giving are the marks of true discipleship to Christ (2011, 218). Secondly, in the context of speech about workplace as part of our ministry, the document connects discipleship with living, thinking, working, and speaking “from a biblical worldview and with missional effectiveness in every place or circumstance of daily life and work” (2011, 193). Third, the docu-

ment points out that the art is a valid and valuable component of our call to discipleship in the life of the faith community (2011, 194). Fourth, it is mentioned that “only those whose lives already display basic qualities of mature discipleship should be appointed to leadership in the first place” (2011, 210). And finally, the document mentions the need for “oral methodologies in discipling programmes” (2011, 209) and it is recognized that sometimes discipleship occurs in the context of small groups who gathers around Jesus and the Bible “for fellowship, teaching, worship and prayer” (2011, 205).

This analysis demonstrates that *The Cape Town Commitment* gives a rather general description of discipleship and its importance, which is understandable because this is not expected from this document. Therefore, in the continuation of this article, we turn now toward Jesus’ model of discipleship and its importance within the context of the biblical story.

Discipleship – What Is It?

In a nutshell, we can define discipleship as a process in which a disciple who follows his teacher, in his walk with God become like his teacher. And, as it is pointed out in the first part of the article “Discipleship in the Context of Judaism in Jesus’ Time - Part I” (Gracin and Budiselić 2019), when Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 gave the Great Commission about making disciples of people from all nations, he had in mind a certain model of discipleship. In other words, he did not say, “Make disciples as best as you know and can,” but he prescribed certain *content* and *form* on how to do that.¹

Furthermore, the article discusses how during Jesus’ time there are three layers or stages of education that were developed – a model that its origin can

1 This thesis is based on idea that the discipleship that Jesus practices is on the one hand a product of the OT revelation, and on the other hand, a result of historical development. In other words, we cannot always draw a direct parallel between the OT revelation and Jesus’ practice of discipleship. As Matthias Henze (2018, 12) notices, in Jesus’ world we encounter some things that we do not find in the OT – things like: synagogue, the term of rabbi, Pharisee, Sadducee, etc. Based on this Henze (2018, 13) concludes that we cannot understand Jesus and his message without knowing first-century Judaism. How can we understand Henze’s statement? On the one hand, Judaism of Jesus’ time is a fruit of a historical development and adaptation to new circumstances such as: from loss of the Temple to the growth of the Graeco-Roman influence. Hence, this is an attempt to live the OT revelation in the new circumstances. On the other hand, by saying this I do not elevate Jewish culture to the level of revelation i.e. the Scriptures, but I do recognize the fact that Jesus might take something from his time and apply it in his ministry knowing that Jesus would not take anything from his time that would be contrary to OT revelation. If my argumentation is valid, then, methodologically speaking, to understand some elements of discipleship the crucial factor is not the OT but how well do we know first-century Judaism.

be found in the example of Elijah and Elisha in which discipleship occurs in the context of following a person and teaching by example and Ezra's emphasis on knowledge and proper interpretation of the Scriptures. In the first two stages, the emphasis was on memorization and interpretation of the text (we could say that the first two stages have its origin in Ezra). In the third stage, the emphasis was on teaching by example in the context of relationship (we could say that the third stage has its origin in Elijah-Elisha example). In that third stage, disciples in a group follow their rabbi for a long time in order to become like him in their walk with God and eventually one day raise their own disciples.²

All that means that when Jesus called out his disciples, they were not uneducated or ignorant peasants, but people who were well-versed in the knowledge of the Scriptures. These people almost certainly went through the first stage of education and possibly some of them went even further and finished or dropped out eventually. All that is to say that with them, Jesus does not start "from scratch" but builds on existing foundation inviting them into *rabbi-talmidim* relationship that to them was very familiar and understandable. Jesus' disciples leave everything and to follow him (Mt. 4:20-22; 19:27-29); they are being taught by Jesus in words (Mt. 5:1-2; 11:1; 13:10), but also by example (Jn. 13:15; 21:15-19); they are sent to proclaim the same message and do the same deeds as Jesus (Mt. 10:1-10); Jesus calls them disciples of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 13:52); and perhaps more importantly, they know that their goal is to become one day as like their rabbi (Mt. 10:24; Lk 6:40). From this description, it is noticeable that not every person that follows Jesus can be his disciple, because Jesus' disciples are those who hold to his teaching (Jn. 8:31), keep his word and bear fruit (Jn. 15:7-8) put him on the first place in their lives above anyone or anything else, and they are willing to die for him (Lk. 14:25-27). All this confirms that Jesus' model of discipleship did not happen "by accident" and that the secret of success of transferring his mission on his disciples lies in the way he taught his disciples.

Jesus' commission in Matthew 28:20 contains two important elements: "teach them to do" and "everything I have commanded you." Jesus does not say that the primary task is to teach believers to *know* or have some *skills*, but to *do*. Equally so, teaching them to do does not mean only "telling them what to do," but also to show them by example. Furthermore, Jesus does not say that the primary task is to teach believers any kind of doctrine, other than which he commanded. That

2 "In first-century Jewish society, Torah shared center stage with Jerusalem. In the countryside, away from the activities of the Temple in Jerusalem, the synagogue and *bet midrash* ('house of study') emerged to play lead roles in the religious lives of people. In the synagogue Torah was read and expounded, and in the *bet midrash* it was memorized and studied. These two institutions helped spawn a Torah-centric culture in first-century Israel." (Young 2010, 29).

means that original Jesus' disciples had to know by memory what he taught, because Jesus did not leave any written record of his teachings. And finally, Jesus does not say that the primary purpose is to make people *believers* or *saved ones* but *disciples*.

Discipleship in the Light of Matthew 28

The text from Matthew 28:16-20 confirms three key elements of discipleship that are unchangeable and valid for us today: a) the necessity of knowing and memorizing Jesus' teaching; b) the necessity of teaching by example; c) the necessity from converts to make disciples. Regardless of cultures, times, customs, and contexts in which discipleship occurs, it cannot be successful and fruitful if we ignore some of these elements.³

The first and beginning element or ingredient of discipleship is knowledge of the Scripture. Perhaps it is difficult for us today to imagine a time and culture where kids from the ages of five or six would go every day to the synagogue to learn the Torah and then in the later period of their lives to learn the rest of the Tanakh. It is difficult to imagine this passion with whom even adults would use various opportunities that through numerous repetitions learn the Scriptures by memory. Speaking about that practice, Marvin R. Wilson (1989, 303) will say that we live in time when educators tend to de-emphasize and even depreciate the importance of memorization. Contrary to that, "In Bible times, however, the mechanics of learning required that the teacher listen to the student repeat the lesson back to him verbatim. The most important quality for being a good scholar was a trained and retentive memory." Wilson (1989, 304) furthermore points out how rabbinic literature speaks about the need that each member of the community to be diligent to maintain a study schedule. "Though set times were doubtless arranged throughout the biblical period, they became more important during the talmudic period...But the synagogue became the communal study hall where young and old alike engaged in the study of Torah and Talmud. The rabbis considered the synagogue's role as a house of study more important than its role as a house of prayer."

This approach to education requires intentional setting of time for that purpose, and based on that Wilson (1989, 305) claims that there is no short-cut method

3 In this article I do not discuss the role and importance of water baptism. Not because I think that it is not an essential ingredients of discipleship but because in significant part of evangelical Christianity so called "sinner's prayer" is considered as a moment where person surrenders himself to Christ (being saved), and water baptism is then "outside declaration and confirmation of already existing faith." Since I do not support the practice of sinner's prayer but think that water baptism should have place and role that today sinner's prayer has, to discuss these issues would lead this article in some other direction. Hence, the discussion about the connection between water baptism and discipleship, I leave for some other occasion.

to a sound education. If someone claims that spiritual growth is his or her priority, then such person has to set apart a significant amount of time toward that purpose. To confirm this claim, Wilson quotes Psalm 1:2 “His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” and the Qumran community for which we could say that she took and understood that text literally, “According to the Manual of Discipline discovered at the community, the laws of Scripture had to be continuously studied, day and night, throughout the year. In order to accomplish this task, the membership was divided into three shifts. Thus, hundreds in the community were reading, studying, and worshipping all night long.”

While people in Jesus’ time knew Scriptures well but they did not know Jesus, today situation is different. Shanks and Witherington (2003, 91) argue the following:

North America, like much of the Western World, is a society in which Jesus is virtually omnipresent, while at the same time the population is largely biblically illiterate. There is a seemingly inexhaustible fascination with Jesus, but widespread ignorance about what the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament say about him, his family, and the early Christians. Even serious believers tend to operate with only a sketchy sense of what the Bible actually says.

Today our challenge is double: besides the fact that we have to know Jesus’ teaching, Jesus’ teaching is impossible to know without quality knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, or as we would say “the Old Testament.”

The second key ingredient of discipleship is teaching by example. Speaking about the model of discipleship that Jesus follows, Jacob Neusner (2000, 59) claims the following: “How, after all, is any master going to teach true lessons, except by example, gesture more than word? The Torah left as a mere book dies, mere words on a page or a parchment. The Torah comes to life, in particular, in attitude and action, in the way in which masters of the Torah embody it.” In accordance with this, Jesus’ invitation “follow me” for Jesus as a teacher/rabbi primarily means teaching by example, and for those who follow him, learning through imitation and repetition. Nolland (2018, 310) adds the following: “The teacher does not merely impart a body of information but rather teaches the disciple to be as a person what the teacher already is.”⁴

4 To that, we can add the following: “A disciple was one who made a life commitment to a particular master and his way of life. The type of “disciple” and the corresponding life of ‘discipleship’ was determined by the type of master, but commitment to the master and his ways was central. Therefore, it is not enough to ask what a disciple is. Rather, we must ask of whom the person is a disciple and at what period of time. A disciple of Jesus during his earthly ministry was one who made a life commitment to him. Among those who made an early commitment were some who gave up following Jesus around when his way proved to be different than what they expected (cf. Jn. 6:60-66)” (Wilkins 2010, 39).

In this area, we also have double challenge. First, as Thomas W. Hudgins (2014, 223) notices, “The temptation in Christian circles is to associate the mental acquisition of content with successful instruction. Rote memorization is far from the holistic transformation that God intends for Christian believers. That is called intellectualism.” Hudgins (2014, 223) furthermore poses the question has one of the most important areas of Christian discipleship such as modeling and mentoring been neglected, and wonders “if Christian discipleship can really take place apart from a more mature believer shepherding a less mature believer in the Christian life?” If we accept the statement from Daryl Eldridge (1995, 82), “Listening is not learning, and speaking is not teaching,” then discipleship, in the context of church or theological institutions has a serious problem. Of course that teaching, passing information or knowledge is one element in the process of discipleship. Paul would, while speaking about his relationship with Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10, put on the first place doctrine (διδασκαλία), but if the process of discipleship stops and becomes only that, it is impossible to achieve what *The Cape Town Commitment* calls “the need for radical obedient discipleship” that leads “to maturity, to growth in depth as well as growth in numbers...”

The second challenge comes out of first and it is connected with the place where discipleship usually occurs. If we talk about theological institutions, education as one aspect of discipleship, they primarily take place in specially arranged rooms – classrooms. If we talk about church, discipleship primarily occurs in specially designed rooms – church buildings. What is common to theological institutions and churches are that education primarily happens in spaces that are separated from real life. We could say that a person stops with his or her life, goes to that space (classroom or church building), receives lesson and comes back to the real life. Faith lessons do not occur in the context of real life nor are those who are taught challenged to try practice their faith in a real life setting. Contrary to that, Jesus’ classroom was real life. Yes, he teaches in synagogues, but also in temple, fields, desert places, streets, houses, while he walks, eats with people, etc. Jesus’ disciples not only that they have an opportunity to see Jesus how he “walks” his faith, but also are able themselves to put their faith in practice.⁵

If we realistically assess our current situation of discipleship, we come to following methodology or formula of discipleship; discipleship is often reduced to buildings/classrooms where some theological program is being taught two hours a week by a pastor or teacher, where after lecture ends, each person goes his

5 Wilkins (2010, 22) says the following: “Sometimes our discipleship programs thwart true discipleship. What I mean by this is that we become so involved with our programs that we isolate ourselves from real life. Jesus called his disciples to him so that he could teach them how to walk with him in the real world. That is true discipleship.”

own way. The teacher then thinks that he fulfilled his obligation because he told people what they need to do (knowledge – information), and church members or students are then responsible to put that knowledge into practice as best as they know and can. In such scheme, it is not expected that the “teacher” be an example of what he teaches (the person can easily hide behind knowledge, title, department, pulpit, or gifts), and the “students” are more than likely left alone to put into practice what they learned.

The third challenge is to create disciples and not converts, believers, or saved ones. In contemporary language, we can say that failure in the first two challenges fills our churches with people who are “audiences,” “commentators,” or even “fans” but not necessarily disciples. On that track, I offer the following terminology that describe the various groups of people that we can find in our churches. This terminology is a fruit of my experience and observations of various phenomena within Christianity, but I believe it describes the nuances that exist among the Christians in their walk with God.

BELIEVER – this is a biblical term that describes a person who believes, but who also is *faithful* to what he believes. Due to various historical circumstances, in our context “believer” signifies a person that *mentally* accepts and confesses the doctrine of Christian faith. However that definition “believer” does not reflect the biblical definition of that term because mental acceptance does not guarantee new birth nor means that such a person is saved. Therefore, using this term in a non-biblical way is a significant obstacle to the development of discipleship.

SAVED ONE – another biblical term that describes the state and position of those who are “in Christ.” The problem arises if that term contains only the dimension “saved from” and lose the dimension “saved for.” In biblical terms, a person is not only saved from sin, death, the devil, etc., but it is also saved for the purpose that God through such a person fulfills his will for reaching and saving other people. If saved person begins to think that his salvation is the end and goal of one’s relationship with God, such a person will more than likely see his salvation as the end goal of his faith, and will think that all that God requires from him now is to keep the faith until death so that it can enter into heaven. In this scheme, the term “saved one” loses its original meaning and begins to signify that a person is primarily concerned for his own spiritual well-being and salvation, and in this way, we have a biblical term that also represents a significant obstacle to the development of discipleship.

AUDIENCE – I use this term to mark those Christians who go to church

and do whatever is expected from them, but they go to receive, and not to give. They expect to be amused and to receive something for their own benefit, but such persons often are not concerned with any situation in the church or the world around them.

COMMENTATOR – this term I use for people in the church who walk with God at a similar level as those who are the “audience.” The difference is that while the audience are those who are the silent part of the church, who come to church and leave, a “commentator” is a Christian whose primary expression of spirituality is that he is good in commenting and criticizing, and he clearly presents his objection to others. His strength is that he might speak well and correct but he is doing little to help others or change something.

FAN – while the “audience” are those who are silent and the “commentator” are those who are the vocal part of the church, a “fan” is a person in the church, who contrary to commentator, supports and fervently defends the colors of his denominations. He thinks that his local church is the only true and the best church and his pastor has the best sermons and is anointed more than other pastors. Likewise, such a person cheers for other Christians from his own “tribe” who strive and serve God but himself will rarely come down from the stands into the “field” to play with such people a game of faith.

So, why do we have these labels? I believe these labels help us understand that in our churches sits various groups or types of people. Likewise, in churches we can detect various trends, spiritual conditions, or situations on which we can apply biblical labels as well. Each of the labels above describe real situations in evangelical churches, but in terms their content, they do not have anything to do with discipleship. Moreover, even those biblically-orthodox terms, if they are not devoid from their false content, represent a significant obstacle to discipleship.

The next three texts that best summarize the goal of discipleship reveal the difference between a person who is disciple in comparison to everything else.

The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher (Lk. 6:40).

The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters (Mt. 10:24-25).

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you (Jn. 13:15).

The goal of discipleship is to achieve that in his walk with God the disciple becomes like his teacher. Hence, the focus is not only on gaining knowledge or developing skills, but on becoming...to become someone...like someone or to

be alike. Or to repeat and further expand Nolland's statement, "The teacher does not merely impart a body of information but rather teaches the disciple to be as a person what the teacher already is. Only Jesus himself is finally adequate as the teacher." Accordingly, a disciple is someone who is willing to endure whatever it takes to become like someone else. Since the standard is raised so high, it is no wonder that Jesus will say twice in Luke 14:25-27 that it "cannot be." Those who come to Jesus and do not love him more than anyone and anything else and is not willing to carry his cross, cannot be Jesus' disciple. The church of Jesus Christ must have a clear picture of what discipleship is and what are the prerequisites for discipleship if wants to make disciples and not just converts, believers, commentators, etc.

Discipleship – Why?

After we briefly analyzed what discipleship is, we still need to address why discipleship is important. It is one thing to know *what* we should do, but more importantly is to know *why* we should do something (in our case discipleship). Precisely, that importance of discipleship should encourage us to diligently discover what discipleship is and how we should practice it.

If we read the Bible as a one big story, then we can say that the idea of discipleship is already grounded in Genesis 12. The Bible begins with the creation account in which everything is described as "good" (Gen. 1:10, 13, 18, 21, 25) "very good" (Gen. 1:31) and "blessed" (Gen. 1:22, 28; 2:3). After the rebellion, God punishes woman and man and curses the snake and ground. Instead of goodness and blessing, we have a world in which one part of God's heavenly family (Satan + fallen angels) stand in enmity toward God and people. Women are punished with severe pains in childbearing and instead of harmony in the family, there will be a "battle of sexes." Men are punished with work that will be a source of pain and labor. Instead of protection and care, men will now be a tyrant towards his wife. All together, they are returning to the material from which they were created.

Instead of destroying everything, God will redeem his creation and bring it back under his dominion and he will do that through the "seed of a woman." Genesis 3:15 says the following: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." In both Hebrew cases for the verbs "crush" and "strike," it uses the same verb *šûp* in an imperfect tense that implies the permanence of the conflict. Since the "snake" (Satan, cf. Rev 12:9) is the primary cause of the fall, chaos, disorder and death, her defeat will mark the return of blessing and goodness into creation. But how does God think to defeat that snake? Through the seed of a woman!

Hence, the author of Genesis guides us through events to show us “who” is “which” seed.⁶

If we trace the usage of *zěřǎ* “seed” in Genesis 4 to 12, then we can see that this word is used for birds (Gen. 7:3), for seed, and for harvest (Gen. 8:22) but also for the people. The first occurrence of “seed” in connection with men after Genesis 3:15 refers to Seth (Gen. 4:25). After Cain killed Abel, Eve has another child and says, “God has granted me another *seed* [emphasis mine] in place of Abel.” Since Cain is a murderer of his brother, he cannot be counted in the seed of a woman, so we know that the line of “woman’s seed” continues through Seth.

Through genealogy in Genesis 5 we follow the line of seed from Seth to Noah, and in Genesis 9 we see that Noah becomes a carrier of original Adamic blessing from Genesis 1:28, since God gives him the same three things: blessing, fruitfulness, and land (Gen. 9:1). In Genesis 9:9, we see that God with Noah and his seed makes a covenant, and from Noah the story continues to Abraham. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth and because of event in Genesis 9:18-24, we see how Noah in Genesis 9:25-27 puts a curse on Ham who is a forefather of the Canaanites. He then elevates Shem above his brothers by giving his “blessing” and points out that YHWH is “the God of Shem” and he puts Japheth under Shem’s care.

If we follow the story furthermore, especially through the genealogies in Genesis 10 and 11, in Genesis 12:1-3 we come to Abraham who stands in the line of Shem. Except for the fact that he stands in the line of the “woman’s seed,” Abraham is important because his election comes as a reaction to the rebellion in Genesis 11 and building of the tower of Babel when evil, so to speak, becomes the kingdom, and because for the first time we see how God will use someone and through him return the blessing into his creation by reaching “all nations.”⁷ Abraham, like Noah and Adam, receives three things: blessing, fruitfulness (“I will make you into a great nation”), and land but now it becomes clearer that God will somehow use Abraham and his family as a means to spread that blessing among the nations. It is important to emphasize that the mentioning of the blessing in

6 Actually, the whole Bible is an exposition of Genesis 3:15 by showing us who is which seed and how seed of a woman will defeat seed of the snake. In the OT we can recognize who is the seed of a woman by the usage of this word for Abraham and his family (often through genealogies) and through the covenants. Namely, God makes his covenants only with those who are “seed of a woman.”

7 “The earlier covenant [Noahic covenant] is the basis of God’s *providential* preservation of all life throughout the span of human history...The covenant with Abraham, on the other hand, is the basis of God’s *redemptive* work within the human history. The universal goal of this covenant is to bring God’s redemptive blessing to all nations” (Wright 2014, 90).

Genesis 12 is an echo of the creational blessing when everything was “good,” “very good,” and “blessed.” Which means that a “blessing” implies the return of that creation order and state of rest, that is, Sabbath into creation, which means that this blessing is connected with the idea that earth will become God’s temple again – a place where God dwells and reigns. In the rest of Genesis, we read that the promise made to Abraham is bind to Abraham’s offspring, i.e., “seed” (Gen. 12:7; 13:15-16; 15:3, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7-9, 12, 19 etc.). In the rest of the OT, we read how God fulfils the promises made to Abraham about the creation of a nation (Genesis – Exodus) and the giving of a land (Exodus – Joshua). So, why did God create the nation of Israel and gave them Promised Land? So that this nation can be a “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6) and as such to perform the ministry of intercession before God for the nations, but also to represent God to all other nations. How successful they were in this, we can read in the rest of the OT.

The Connection between Matthew 28:18-20 and Genesis 12:1-3

After we have briefly analyzed the plot of the first 12 chapters of the Bible, we saw that the return of the creational blessing was tied with Abraham and his family. Also, we said that the OT is actually an exposition of Genesis 3:15 where we can read who is which seed and we can follow the storyline of the conflict between these two seeds. Hence, it is no wonder that the NT begins with “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mt. 1:1), and the expression Βίβλος γενέσεως can be translated as “The book of the genealogy” (KJV, NKJV, ESV, etc.). At the very beginning, the NT introduces us to the “story of seeds” by showing us that Jesus carries out that mission that God gave to Abraham and David and that he is a carrier of that promised blessing. Because, as we said, if the “snake” is the primary cause of the fall, chaos, disorder, and death, her defeat will mark the beginning of the return of the blessing and goodness into creation.⁸

The end of Matthew is also important because the Great Commission contains a link with Genesis 12:3. If Jesus’ ministry at the beginning of Matthew is represented as continuation of the task given to Abraham and David, then Matthew’s

8 If we follow the story of the fall, we have the following sequences: first, the snake rebels and with it pulls part of celestial beings and incites men to rebel against God; men falls into sin and evil of disobedience is spilled over into society which then becomes filled with violence, chaos, death, etc. Finally, the creation itself becomes affected by that fall (animals, land, vegetation, etc.). Hence, if the chronology of rebellion was snake – men – society – creation, the restoration will happen in that order. Jesus first defeats Satan; then he saved and touches individuals; more restored individuals who walk with God have positive effects on their societies. But, all of that does not mean that the act of salvation is complete. In his second coming, Jesus will completely defeat Satan, save his faithful, purge heaven and earth from evil, and restore his creation by creating new heaven and earth.

ending reveals to us how Jesus confers that same task to his disciples. There are three times in Genesis where God connects the spreading of the blessing to all nations with Abraham and his family. In the first case (Gen 12:3), LXX uses the expression *πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς*, and in two other cases (Gen. 18:18; 22:18) the expression *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς* is used. In Matthew 28:19, the author does not use the LXX expression from Genesis 12:3 but that from Genesis 18:18 and 22:18. Even though with the mentioning of “all nations,” Matthew does not mention “blessing,” in Galatians 3:8, Paul will explicitly connect the blessing of all nations from Genesis 12:3 with Jesus. And in Acts 3:25-26, Peter will connect blessing with “turning away from iniquities.”

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| <p>Gen 12:3 [πᾶσαι] αἱ φυλαὶ [τῆς γῆς]: “all the families of the earth”</p> | <p>Mt 28:19 [μαθητεύσατε] πάντα τὰ ἔθνη: “make disciples of all the nations”</p> |
| <p>Gen 18:18; 22:18 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη [τῆς γῆς]: “all the nations of the earth”</p> | <p>Gal 3:8 ἐνευλογηθήσονται...πάντα τὰ ἔθνη: “...all the nations shall be blessed.”</p> |
| | <p>Acts 3:25 ὁμοῦντες ἐστε οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῆς διαθήκης ἧς διέθετο ὁ θεὸς πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν λέγων πρὸς Ἀβραάμ: “You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham:”</p> <p>Acts 3:26 καὶ ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου [ἐν-] ευλογηθήσονται πᾶσαι αἱ πατριαὶ τῆς γῆς. ὑμῖν πρῶτον ἀναστήσας ὁ θεὸς τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εὐλογοῦντα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ὑμῶν: “‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”</p> |

What is all of this saying to us regarding the connection between Genesis 12:3 and Matthew 28:18-20? According to Victor Hamilton (1990, 387), “Because *tá éthnē* (the nations) are to be blessed in Abraham, Christ’s invitation to his disciples was to make disciples of *pánta tá éthnē* (Matt. 28:19). Thus a scriptural basis for the missionary outreach of the church is found in Gen. 12:3.” Wright (2006, 213) will

also point out the following: “The words of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, the so-called Great Commission, could be seen as a christological mutation of the original Abrahamic commission – ‘Go...and be a blessing...and all nations on earth will be blessed through you.’” Or, to put in another words, “There the blessing promised to Abraham and through him to all people of the earth (Gen. 12:3) are said now to be fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah” (Wilkins 1999, 55).

Conclusion

We started with the claim that discipleship is extremely important for evangelical Christianity. We sought to demonstrate its importance through the analysis of *what* discipleship is, but also through analysis of its importance, the question of *why*. So, let us start at the end. In the light of the document, *The Cape Town Commitment*, that emphasize the need for radical discipleships⁹ and point out that “to fail in discipleship and disciple-making, is to fail at the most basic level of our mission.” I think that it is of huge importance for evangelical churches to renew the consciences how discipleship is not an “extra-curricular activity” or “elective course”, but it is a way and means through which God wants to spread his redemptive blessing among all nations. Hence, discipleship is not blessing in the sense of Genesis 12:3 but it is a *means* of spreading that blessing. The weight of that truth should urge us to ask ourselves what discipleship truly is and whether we practice it in our churches and theological institutions.

When we discussed the question what discipleship really is, we said that Jesus’ model of discipleship contains the transfer of knowledge and information, primarily the knowledge and information about biblical texts. There is no discipleship without the knowledge of the biblical text: both Old and New Testament. Jesus did not stop there since that knowledge and interpretation was put into practice by showing his disciples how to *walk* in these truths. Therefore, it is of primary importance that we return this in our churches and theological institutions through teaching by example. We cannot increase the number of churches or academic activities and believe that by doing that, we are making disciples. Even though activities are part of discipleship, they cannot be a replacement for teaching by example. So why is that important? Besides the fact that a disciple has an opportunity to see in practice how to apply some truths and truly be a

9 There is no discipleship with adjective – in this case “radical.” Discipleship is discipleship. The very fact that the document mentions “radical discipleships” testifies to the fact that in evangelical churches exist various types and definitions of discipleship which in essence are not that, and stressing the need for radical discipleship shows that, to use Shakespearean language, “something is rotten in the state of Denmark.”

disciple, teaching by example is extremely healthy for “exposing the teachers.” Namely, many of us do not live in the way that we teach since we can hide behind our titles, departments, pulpits, etc., It is not a problem if a person does not live out what he teaches. The problem is if denies that or is not aware of that. Hence, discipleship must be drawn out of from the church and various other rooms or spaces and be placed in the context of a real life and life situations. That move will not only expose many teachers, but will also reveal true spiritual condition of church members.

Those who belong to Christ, the Bible calls them the “sons of Abraham.” This is not only a title that speaks about someone’s status but also means that those who are Abraham’s sons share with him the same calling and mission of spreading the blessings of God’s rule. In Acts 11:26, we can find one short but important text, “And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” While today we discuss whether a person can be a Christian but not be a disciple, Acts 11:26 is showing to us a diametrically opposite example, that the label “Christian” was reserved for those who were “disciples.” In other words, if you were not a disciple, you were not a Christian. The fact that people think of themselves as Christians while at the same time they are not disciples, demonstrates how much this label “Christian” has become prostituted and devoid of form and content.

If *The Cape Town Commitment* is truly serious in regards to the topic of discipleship, then these three suggestions in the conclusion are of extreme importance for the future of evangelical Christianity. That is the way toward growth, health, and progress of the Church but also towards redemption of the term “disciple” and “discipleship” from the false forms and content that were attached to them over the course of time.

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Ervin Budiselić

Pojam učenja u *Capetownskom iskazu o predanju*: Teološki osvrt

Sažetak

Dokument Capetownski iskaz o predanju jedan je od važnijih dokumenata evanđeoskog kršćanstva koji sažeto progovara o mnogim temama. Jedna od tih tema je i učenje. Članak se osvrće na spomen teme učenja u dokumentu te u nastavku nudi teološki osvrt na temu sadržaja i važnosti učenja za današnje evanđeosko kršćanstvo. Nakon uvoda i prvog dijela, u kojem se adresira tema

učeništva u Capetownskom iskazu, u nastavku članka nudi se teološki osvrt na temu učeništva. Drugi dio članka nudi raspravu o sadržaju i formi učeništva, dok se u trećem dijelu pojašnjava važnost učeništva, ustvrđujući kako je učeništvo (Mt 28) način ostvarivanja izvornoga stvaralačkog blagoslova obećanog Abrahamu u Postanku 12. U zaključku članka ističe se da, ako želimo ozbiljno uzeti temu učeništva iz Capetownskog iskaza o predanju, onda bismo trebali: a) razumjeti kako učeništvo nije „slobodna aktivnost“, već sredstvo kojim Bog želi proširiti svoj otkupiteljski blagoslov svim narodima; b) u naše crkve i teološke institucije vratiti poučavanje primjerom jer su broj crkvenih ili akademskih aktivnosti dio učeništva, ali ne smiju biti zamjena za pouku primjerom; c) otkupiti pojam „kršćanin“ na način da taj pojam bude rezerviran za one koji su „učenici“.