



# Context Matters for Transformational Ecotheology: A Comparison of Swedish and American Theological Academies

by Dr. Beth E. Elness-Hanson

## Abstract

*Environmental advocates identify that we have known for decades how to mitigate anthropogenic climate change, yet main obstructions include greed and apathy. To deal with these obstacles, information is not enough; A transformation is needed. This examination argues that transformational pedagogy applied to ecotheology within theological education can be a vehicle in support of the needed transformation. However, the academic context matters, such that pedagogical approaches need to be strategically adapted to ethically engage cognitive, affective, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions of learning.*

*As a Hebrew Bible specialist who has taught in theological higher education in both Sweden and the USA, the author compares academic frameworks that can endorse or constrain transformational pedagogy when engaging faith aspects that are inherent within ecotheology. The author's theoretical perspectives include transformational pedagogy aligned with George M. Slavich and Philip G. Zimbardo's principles, as well as a covenant of vocation approach to creation care. The author's methodological approaches are shaped by different regulations for classroom instruction in Sweden and the USA, as well as a postdoctoral ecotheology research project that engaged creation care education with the Maasai people group in Tanzania. Finally, the author provides practical examples from these contexts for applying transformational pedagogy principles for educators and administrators.*

**Keywords:** transformational ecotheology, transformational pedagogy, climate crisis, creation care, Sweden, USA



## Introduction: The Problem is Greed

Environmental scientist, Gus Speth, former Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality in the USA, stated:

I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.<sup>1</sup>

Selfishness, greed, and apathy are huge problems in dealing with anthropogenic climate change. However, I maintain that transformational pedagogy applied in ecotheological education can be a facilitator of the spiritual transformation needed to address these problems. Yet, the academic context matters!

I am a Hebrew Bible specialist who has taught bachelor's and master's levels biblical studies in theological higher education in both Sweden and the USA.<sup>2</sup> In this examination, I compare my experiences in Swedish and American academic frameworks that can endorse or constrain transformational ecotheology. Each context has different accreditation regulations for classroom instruction which determines the parameters of what can be engaged in the academy. In addition, I draw upon experiences from my Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral ecotheology research in Tanzania, where I facilitated collaboratively developed creation care lessons—written and taught by teachers, pastors, and theologians from the Maasai people group—in order to develop best practices of climate change mitigation and adaptation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, this examination is also informed by the transformational pedagogy for ecotheological education applied in this postdoctoral project. With these understandings, I invite the expansion of conversations among ecotheological educators in higher education.

1 Steve Curwood and James Gustave (Gus) Speth, "We Scientists Don't Know How to Do That," <http://Winewaterwatch.Org/>, 5 May 2016, <https://winewaterwatch.org/2016/05/we-scientists-dont-know-how-to-do-that-what-a-commentary/>.

2 In Sweden, I taught at Johannelund School of Theology. In the USA, I taught at Trinity Lutheran College, Everett, WA (now closed), and I continue to teach at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA.

3 I focus on a gospel-centered approach for facilitating transformation through creation care lessons disseminated through theological education and church-based educational systems, including secondary school and lay-pastor training. Previously, my bachelor's degree in biology opened a door for me to teach biology for three years in secondary school in Tanzania, East Africa. I continued to engage with the Maasai through ethnographic studies, PhD research, and other studies that used qualitative research with Maasai theologians to deepen my understanding of the cultural context and ontological worldview. So, with my postdoctoral research project (2023–2026), I was able to go back to Tanzania for two years in order to develop lessons in response to the climate crisis.



In this essay, I claim that transformational ecotheology in higher education depends fundamentally on the institutional context and that pedagogical approaches can be strategically adapted to ethically engage cognitive, affective, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions of learning. I begin by describing transformational pedagogy to frame the discussion, then I compare higher education in the Swedish and American contexts, and I also suggest content and pedagogical methods for transformational ecotheology in the academy. Finally, I provide examples strategies for mitigating constrained contexts as well as ideas for expanding transformational teaching that can support student transformation in the midst of climate change's problems of selfishness, greed, and apathy.

## **Transformational Pedagogy**

### **WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIONAL PEDAGOGY?**

To frame the discussion, this examination starts with describing transformational pedagogy to establish a foundational understanding. The following descriptions include the foci of: 1) learners, 2) teachers, and 3) the intended outcomes of the education through the application of curricula and pedagogy in a context.

First, UNESCO's summary of "transformative education" helps to coalesce a breadth of theory, philosophy, psychology, and methodology:

Learners must engage with the world and find coherence between the world they experience in school and the world we all wish to build outside school.

To build this world, we need to learn to read and write, but we also need to learn collaboration, empathy, complex problem solving, connection to other human beings and nature.

Education can only be "transformative" when students feel valued, acknowledged, safe and are included in the learning community as full and active members. This starts by preventing and addressing school violence and bullying, gender-based violence, as well as health and gender related discrimination towards learners and educators.

Teachers are expected to transform their teaching, for example, ensuring that the curriculum, pedagogy, learning materials, schools



or learning environments are meaningful in the natural, political, economic, and cultural contexts.

For education to be of high quality, it must be transformative.<sup>4</sup>

In the public health sphere, Cheryl Merzel states that transformative learning is:

... a paradigm-shifting approach that enables learners to critically reflect on their existing frames of reference and beliefs, and transform them into new ways of understanding and problem solving through a reframing of issues... This approach posits that a central goal of adult education should be to enable “the process of helping learners become more aware of the context of their problematic understandings and beliefs, more critically reflective on their assumptions and those of others, more fully and freely engaged in discourse, and more effective in taking action on their reflective judgments.”<sup>5</sup>

George Slavich and Philip Zimbardo identify that transformational teaching as a discipline has developed several learning principles and methods of instruction. The didactic *methods* include “active learning, student-centered learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, and problem-based learning.”<sup>6</sup> Slavich and Zimbardo continue that the basic *principles* of transformational teaching include:

- Facilitate acquisition and mastery of key course concepts;
- Enhance strategies and skills for learning and discovery; and
- Promote positive learning-related attitudes, values, and beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

Note that these principles include cognitive (concepts), behavioral (skills), and affective (attitudes, values, and beliefs) principles respectively. These can be remembered metaphorically as head, heart, and hands (with a modified order).

Slavich and Zimbardo apply these principles with *core methods* of transformational teaching:

4 UNESCO, “Five Questions on Transformative Education,” UNESCO, 20 April 2023, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/five-questions-transformative-education>.

5 Cheryl R. Merzel, “Pedagogy for Transformative Teaching and Learning,” *Pedagogy in Health Promotion* 9.4 (2023): 231, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23733799231208392>.

6 George M. Slavich and Philip G. Zimbardo, “Transformational Teaching: Theoretical Underpinnings, Basic Principles, and Core Methods,” *Educ Psychol Rev* 24.4 (2012): 569, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-012-9199-6>.

7 Slavich and Zimbardo, “Transformational Teaching,” 581–84.



- Establishing a shared vision for a course: i.e., “cultivating an educational environment in which students model successful learning strategies and promote attitudinal change;”
- Providing modeling and mastery experiences;
- Intellectually challenging and encouraging students;
- Personalizing attention and feedback;
- Creating experiential lessons; and
- Promoting prelection and reflection.<sup>8</sup>

I align with Slavich and Zimbardo’s three principles as a framework for transformational pedagogy. Below, I discuss how these three principles intersect with ecotheology in theological education. Yet before the intersection, this next section describes the theological educational contexts of Sweden and the USA.

## Academic Context Matters: Comparison of Swedish and American Contexts

This section overviews the academic milieus shaped by accreditation standards in both the Swedish and American contexts in order to facilitate a comparison.

### THE SWEDISH CONTEXT

Within Sweden’s academic theology, Anders Bäckström, Ninna Edgardh, and Per Pettersson identify the influence of Ingemar Hedenius, Professor of Philosophy at Uppsala University, and his 1949 landmark book, *Tro och vetande (Belief and Knowledge)*, as a turn toward a rationalist criterion in higher education. Hedenius claimed that theology has no place in the university because it was “quasi-knowledge” (*kvasivetenskap*) that was based upon metaphysics, myth, or superstition instead of rational thought.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Bäckström et al identify that the universities theology departments “wished to underline its confessional neutrality in the wake of the Hedenius debate.”<sup>10</sup>

8 Slavich and Zimbardo, “Transformational Teaching,” 585–96.

9 Ingemar Hedenius, *Tro och vetande* (A. Bonnier, 1949), 128, 130; Anton Jansson, “‘A Swedish Voltaire’ The Life and Afterlife of Ingemar Hedenius, 20th-Century Atheist,” *Secularism and Nonreligion* 7 (2018): 3–4, <https://doi.org/10.5334/sn9.98>; Taslima Nasrin, “Then What?,” *Dhaka Tribune*, 26 November 2014, Online edition, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/87381/then-what>. Hedenius claimed that atheism was “the only really reasonable standpoint.”

10 Anders Bäckström, Ninna Edgardh Beckman, and Per Pettersson, *Religious Change in Northern Europe: The Case of Sweden* (Verbum, 2004), 232.



This means that disciplines that are “scientific” (*vetenskapliga*) find a home in accredited universities in Sweden.<sup>11</sup> *Vetenskapliga* does have a broader semantic range than what is referred to as *naturvetenskap*—the natural and physical sciences—and an understanding of *vetenskapliga* incorporates the “production of new knowledge using rigorous, recognized methods” applied to disciplines beyond a common science category.<sup>12</sup> However, in Swedish higher education, this means that theological disciplines are taught in a way that so-called “confessional” elements are not permitted.<sup>13</sup> The Hedenius effect for exegetical theology in universities was a focus on historical and linguistic approaches that could be classified as *vetenskapliga*.<sup>14</sup> While the past few decades have seen an integration of broader hermeneutical approaches in exegetical theology in Sweden’s universities, all faculty members continue to be limited in the use of language in the classroom that reflects reasoned faith perspectives.<sup>15</sup> Still, instructors can draw ethical conclusions and make normative statements regarding their understanding of stronger or weaker interpretations based upon methodology, etc., as long as the content is not considered confessional. To equip me for teaching in the Swedish context, I was instructed by the rector (at that time) to teach from an agnostic perspective.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, homiletics and other perceived confessional disciplines that are part of training for clergy are provided through the Swedish folkhögskola system, a regulated educational

11 Universitets och högskolerådet, “Lagar och regler som styr den högre utbildningen,” *UHR.se*, 27 March 2019, 1993: 792, <https://www.uhr.se/publikationer/lagar-och-regler-for-hogre-utbildning/>. Author’s translation: “Laws and regulations for private education providers: Non-state education providers must have permission from the government to issue degrees. The Act (1993:792) on Permission to Issue Certain Degrees states, among other things, that the education must be based on a scientific or artistic basis and on proven experience. The education must also be conducted in such a way that it meets the requirements set out in the first chapter of the Higher Education Act.” Music performance, theatre, dance, and other performing arts are not located in the prestigious universities but are in separate institutes for music and arts, such as a bachelor’s degree in dance at *Stockholms Konstnärliga Högskola*. Scientific studies of the arts, such as history of music or ethnomusicology, may be found in universities.

12 *Svenska Akademiens Ordlista*, s.v. “Vetenskap.” Author’s translation.

13 Sveriges Riksdag, “Kommittédirektiv 2018:15: Konfessionella Inslag i Skolväsendet,” De 2018, [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/kommittedirektiv/konfessionella-inslag-i-skolvasendet\\_h6b115/](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/kommittedirektiv/konfessionella-inslag-i-skolvasendet_h6b115/). Author’s translations: “However, the presence of religious elements such as prayer, blessing or confession of faith has not been deemed permissible.” Clarifications for confessional aspects outside the classroom are: “In an independent school with a denominational orientation, there is thus room for devotions, prayer times or other forms of religious practice. However, this only applies to the part of the education that is not teaching (Government Bill 2009/10:165 pp. 226 and 636). Participation in denominational elements shall be voluntary (Chapter 1, Section 7 of the Education Act).”

14 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107.1 (1988): 11.

15 Beth E. Elness-Hanson, “The Fruitfulness of the Vineyard Metaphor: Isaiah 5 and Beyond,” in *Metaphors in the Prophetic Literature of the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. David Davage, Mikael Larsson, and Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, vol. 35 of *Journal of Ancient Judaism - Supplements* (Brill Schönigh, 2023), 85–91, <https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/64526>. See also my critique of the Western academy that limits right-brained approaches for epistemic contributions and learning.

16 An example is stating a general description used by a faculty member, “If, for the sake of argument, we identify the perspective of Paul/Augustine/Luther, then we can demonstrate how that suggests x, y, and z.”



system, but it is not accredited by the Swedish higher education authority, *Universitetskanslersämbetet* (UKÄ).<sup>17</sup>

In this light, the Swedish-based philosopher, Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen, challenges the limits to academic freedom within higher education through government directives, which she claims is prevalent in Sweden.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, exegetical theology and ecotheology are inherently connected to spiritual aspects of the human condition that are beyond the higher education disciplines as practiced in Sweden. Thus, when the academy reduces scholarly engagement to the left-brained functions of empiric verifiability, then there are various results, two of which I address here. First, the biblical texts are not engaged in a way to foster sympathetic understanding on their own terms as expressions of the authors' faith, understandings of their relationship with God, and their various expressions from historical recital, to praise, and to lament. In light of ecotheology in the Hebrew Bible, Walter Brueggemann argued that it is "urgent and nonnegotiable" to recover "creation as the horizon of biblical theology," with exegesis of the text appreciating YHWH as creator and the source of transformative activities, including a theology of blessing.<sup>19</sup> While, the Swedish university classroom can relay biblical content that the ancient Israelites believed in a creator, it does not allow a fuller engagement of equipping clergy candidates with a theological imagination for how "creation as a horizon" can be interpreted for preaching and faith-based ecojustice activism. This equipping is engaged several years later after they have completed their bachelor's—and in the Church of Sweden—a master's degree in theology,<sup>20</sup> when clergy candidates take folkhögskola pastoral training courses through the Svenska kyrkans utbildningsinstitut (SKUI). Thus, the formal faith integration is removed from the content studied in their exegetical theology courses years prior.<sup>21</sup>

Second, another effect of the *vetenskapliga* teaching approach in Swedish higher education is the reduction of the biblical texts' intersection with the pathos of life and one's existential relationships, both divine and interpersonal, thus, diminishing the ability of addressing the human condition. As Johannes Zschhuber writes, "It may well be argued that

17 "Folkhögskoleförordningen (1977:551)," n.d., [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/folkhogskoleforordningen-1977551\\_sfs-1977-551/](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/folkhogskoleforordningen-1977551_sfs-1977-551/). For example, Section 55 identifies that the academic requirements for a folkhögskola teacher is a Bachelor of Arts degree and with teacher training.

18 Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen, "The Formation of Thinking," *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics* 7.1 (2020): art. 1, pp. 6, 10, <https://doi.org/10.3384/confero.2001-4562.200616>.

19 "The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology," in *The Book That Breathes New Life: Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology*, by Walter Brueggemann (Fortress, 2011), 93–95.

20 Kirsten Donskov Felter et al., *Pastoral Entré: Rapport Fra Forskningsprosjektet Pastoral Learning Practice* (MF KOM / MF Vitenskapelig Høgskole, 2025), 23.

21 Felter et al., *Pastoral Entré*, 36, 56.



subjection to the agenda implied in this form of ‘rationalization’ cripples theological reflection in such a way as effectively to rob it of its most productive and creative power.”<sup>22</sup>

This scientific approach for biblical studies was critiqued 30 years earlier in the USA by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza through her 1987 Society of Biblical Literature Presidential Address. She challenged a scientific approach in biblical studies, which she asserted was a disservice, as it falsely states that interpreters are independent, objective researchers, instead of revealing that all interpretations are contextual. Indeed, all interpretations are influenced by the socio-location of the interpreter. She stated, “The pretension of biblical studies to ‘scientific’ modes of inquiry that deny their hermeneutical and theoretical character and mask their historical-social location prohibits a critical reflection on their rhetorical theological practices in their sociopolitical contexts.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Schüssler Fiorenza foregrounds the ethical issues of a “scientist” ethos, writing, “Scientist epistemologies covertly advocate an a-political reality without assuming responsibility for their political assumptions and interests.”<sup>24</sup>

My arrival in Sweden stimulated an exploration of epistemologies and the false assumption that only unverifiable claims<sup>25</sup> occur in “confessional teaching” and that scientific research is neutral and bias-free. Philosophers have debunked the concept of neutrality, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer,<sup>26</sup> Donna Haraway,<sup>27</sup> and others. There is no neutral researcher or neutral funding of research. Furthermore, from a post-colonial perspective, Fernando Segovia criticized the “cognitive injustice” which centers itself on only one way of knowing, “modern science,” which “is largely the product of the Global North.”<sup>28</sup> Segovia continued to argue that the epistemologies of the Global South are much broader with “methods beyond the imagination of the West.”<sup>29</sup> While university exegetical theology programs have incorporated other hermeneutical approaches

22 Johannes Zachhuber, “Theology as Rationalisation of Religion: The Case of the Nineteenth-Century Research University,” in *Rationalization in Religions*, eds. Yohanan Friedmann and Christoph Marksches (De Gruyter, 2018), 159, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110446395>, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110446395/html>.

23 Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation,” 11–12.

24 Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation,” 13.

25 “Weird and Weirder,” *Magic Numbers: Hannah Fry’s Mysterious World of Maths, Series 1* (BBC Four, 5 July 2023), 29:10. Other disciplines have claims and theories that are not empirically verifiable. Prof. Sylvester James Gates states, “Normally, people think that there’s some intrinsic difference between science and math, on one hand, and faith based belief systems, from the other, and yet what [Kurt] Gödel’s theorem tells us is that’s not true, that there are things in mathematics that you have to take on faith or you can’t do the mathematics.”

26 Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Continuum, 2004), 294.

27 Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575–99.

28 Fernando F. Segovia, “Criticism in Critical Times: Reflections on Vision and Task,” *JBL* 134.1 (2015): 6.

29 Segovia, “Criticism in Critical Times,” 21, 24, 29.



from the Global South in the last few decades, in my experience, the *vetenskapliga* requirement would continue to not allow any sympathetic examination of other epistemologies reflected in some of those approaches.

At Johannelund, most of the students were studying to become ordained clergy. So, most were professing Christians and were seeking to expand their faith with theological scholarship as a means of equipping them to be ministers of the gospel. In this context, I took seriously the need to protect my Swedish institution's accreditation. If there were complaints by any student who held a different worldview, an investigation by the Swedish accrediting authority (UKÄ), might cause problems for the institution.<sup>30</sup> The worst consequence would be losing accredited status, and then students would lose access to the Swedish government's financial aid for students. If that happened, most students would study elsewhere where they could access the aid. Below, I will address how I navigated this respect of the Swedish requirements while providing space for transformational learning and how this can be applied to ecotheology in the academy.

## THE AMERICAN CONTEXT

In the United States, the accreditation system is different than in Sweden. While there is still a focus on scholarship and quality, accreditation is driven by an "institution's mission statement [that] defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement."<sup>31</sup> The accreditation standards are applicable to both the government funded universities and private, faith-based institutions. Thus, if an institution's mission is equipping leaders for church-based ministries, then student learning outcomes that integrate faith-related aspects are appropriate for this accredited institution. Furthermore, by satisfactorily meeting accreditation standards, the institution is then eligible to distribute federal financial aid to its students.

At Wartburg Theological Seminary, this means that student learning outcomes not only engaged historical, theoretical, and methodological knowledge components, but in addition, each lesson is expected to engage practical aspects of how this content could be applied for preaching,

30 "Startpage - Swedish Higher Education Authority," text, n.d., <https://www.uka.se/swedish-higher-education-authority>.

31 Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, "2023 NWCCU Handbook of Accreditation" (NWCCU, 4 March 2025), 14, <https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/lcp7r49i8409za7bt0jeqx0zbpf89eyi>; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, "Standards," NWCCU, 2020, <https://nwccu.org/standards/>. The handbook states: "The Standards are designed to guide institutions in a process of self-reflection that blends analysis and synthesis in a holistic examination of: • The institution's Mission. • The translation of the Mission into assessable objectives supported by programs and services. The appraisal of the institution's potential to fulfill the Mission. • The planning and implementation involved in achieving and assessing the desired outcomes of programs and services. • An evaluation of the results of the institution's efforts to fulfill the Mission and assess its ability to monitor its environment, adapt, and sustain itself as a viable institution."



teaching, and pastoral care.<sup>32</sup> There are faith-engaged practical courses, like spiritual practices and homiletics to equip pastors and deacons. In homiletics, one assignment instructs students to read Martin Luther's Fourth Article of the *Augsburg Confession* and then prepare a short sermon that will "proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>33</sup> To further illustrate this dynamic, the lessons at Wartburg traditionally begin with prayer by either a faculty member or a volunteer student, which is expressly not permitted in Sweden.<sup>34</sup>

Accredited theological education in the USA represents a broad-spectrum of institutional missions. Students self-select for the institution that aligns with their academic and professional goals as well as their faith convictions. The range extends from institutions with secular, pluralistic, and multi-faith understandings of belief systems, such as religion departments in public universities, as well as divinity programs in private universities. On the other side of the spectrum—though also with significant diversity—there are faith-based institutions that typically have a mission of scholarship in service to their denomination or the church in general. These institutions range from so-called categories of liberal to moderate to conservative to fundamentalistic. There are also theological institutions that do not have government-authorized accreditation. All government accredited faith-based programs in the USA have rigorous review protocols. Many institutions, like Wartburg Theological Seminary, sustain double accreditation with both the government-aligned accrediting body (regional) as well as an accreditation by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), which accredits more than 270 graduate theological schools in the USA and Canada.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, in accredited education in the USA, there is a broader diversity of faith engagement in theological institutions, as the accreditation standards ensure quality according to how the mission of the institution is rendered into educational objectives through industry standard and best practices of learning that are demonstrably supported by professional

32 Board of Directors, "Mission & Vision," *Wartburg Theological Seminary*, n.d., <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/mission-and-vision/>; Craig Nesson, ed., "Twelve Pastoral-Diaconal Practices" (*Wartburg Theological Seminary*, May 2021), <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/12-pastoral-diaconal-practices/>. Wartburg's mission statement is, "Wartburg Theological Seminary serves Christ's church through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by being a worship-centered community of critical theological reflection where learning leads to mission and mission informs learning. / The community embodies God's mission by stewarding resources for engaging, equipping, and sending collaborative leaders who interpret, proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ for a world created for communion with God and in need of personal and social healing." See also the "Twelve Pastoral-Diaconal Practices" that are guiding principles and include, "Practice of Being Rooted in the Gospel" and "Practice of *Missio Dei* in Word and Sacrament" among others.

33 Samantha Chapman, "Email: Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ," 20 August 2025.

34 Sveriges Riksdag, "Konfessionella Inslag i Skolväsendet (Kommittédirektiv 2018)." Author's translations: "However, the presence of religious elements such as prayer, blessing or confession of faith has not been deemed permissible."

35 "The Association of Theological Schools," n.d., <https://www.ats.edu/>.



faculty, adequate programs, and satisfactory services. Therefore, this flexibility allows instructors in the USA to apply pedagogical practices that more explicitly engage affective and theological/faith reflections and other methods which support transformational learning. While this overview describes a more constructive context for transformational pedagogy in the USA, below I identify other aspects that are significant challenges in theological higher education in an American context.

## DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

The two contexts of Sweden and the USA are distinct and, thus, provide different advantages and disadvantages in theological higher education. While, in my experience, the accreditation frameworks in the USA offer more adaptability for transformational learning practices, this does not mean that theological faculty members in Swedish contexts are not concerned about holistic learning. While cognizant of more defined boundaries for theological pedagogy in Sweden, there are ethical ways to creatively appropriate transformational teaching. Section 5 below provides suggestions to consider for such contexts.

However, there are other aspects of higher education in these two settings that are significant, with several advantages provided by the Swedish system, which are important to mention. For example, the high cost of tuition for higher education is the burden of the students and families in the USA, in contrast to tuition-free, post-secondary education—with financial aid for six years—for Swedish citizens and permanent residents. This investment by the Swedish government—supported by high income taxes—provides access for all who complete high school (*gymnasiet*) and equips the country with a highly educated workforce. In addition, there is a stronger emphasis on thesis writing in Sweden's theological education, which develops robust research and strong analytical skills. Furthermore, there are no “student athletes” in colleges and universities in Sweden, in contrast to the USA, with research demonstrating slightly lower grade point averages though with better graduation rates than non-athlete students.<sup>36</sup> These aspects reflect well on Swedish higher education and identify challenges within American higher education. In reality, the comparison is rather complex. Yet here, for this exploration of transformative learning in theological education, I delimit the discussion

36 Liam Chalfonte and Sadie Roraback-Meagher, “It’s Time to Level the Playing Field between Athletics and Academics,” *The Tufts Daily*, n.d., <https://www.tuftsdaily.com/article/2024/05/its-time-to-level-the-playing-field-between-athletics-and-academics>; P. Wesley Routon and Jay K. Walker, “Student-Athletes? The Impact of Intercollegiate Sports Participation on Academic Outcomes,” *Eastern Economic Journal* 41.4 (2015): 592–611.



to accreditation standards, such that the mission-oriented accreditation allows for scholarly integration of faith in the American academy.

After returning to the USA from Sweden, I realized how I had become influenced by the “scientific” (*vetenskapliga*) context in a conversation with my colleague, Sam Giere. As we were discussing ecotheology, he expanded my thinking. What I heard was (paraphrased), “How do we do more than glorified environmentalism? Rather, how do we engage ecotheology from the center of the gospel?” So, now, this exploration continues with my working definition of what gospel-centered ecotheology means for transformative ecotheology.

## Transformative Ecotheology

### GOSPEL-CENTERED COVENANT OF VOCATION

My framing of a gospel-centered approach<sup>37</sup> was applied in the creation care pedagogy initiative—working collaboratively with Maasai theologians, clergy, and educators in Tanzania—through my Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral ecotheology research.<sup>38</sup> This approach is shaped by the theology of N.T. Wright,<sup>39</sup> which critiques a “works contract” and advocates for a “covenant of vocation.”<sup>40</sup> What Wright calls a works contract is the prevalent but reductionistic view that the gospel means the forgiveness of one’s sins in order to go to heaven. The fuller effects of the gospel—which includes the forgiveness of sin—are commonly truncated from its holistic, biblical expression to become an individualistic, eternal fire insurance policy. Wright argues for a shift in focus away from “saved from” [hell] to a focus on “reconciled for.” In fact, Wright summarizes, “The work of the cross is not designed to rescue humans from creation, but to rescue them for creation.”<sup>41</sup> Wright continues, “Humans were made

37 Martin Luther, “Article IV. Of Justification,” in *Book of Concord*, 2019, <https://thebookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/article-iv/>. The gospel is the good news of the story of God’s work of grace in the world through Jesus Christ and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, reconciling all things to Jesus Christ (Col 1:15–20). The gospel is what God has done and is doing, not human works.

38 European Commission, “Ontological Bridges for Climate Change Mitigation in Maasailand | OBCCMM | Project | Fact Sheet | HORIZON,” *CORDIS* | European Commission, n.d., <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101065810>. This gospel-centered reflection is developed through collaboration with Maasai theologians and pastors as part of my Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellowship (2023–2026).

39 N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion* (HarperOne, 2016); N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (HarperOne, 2008), 13, 18, 90, 100, 104–5. See *Surprised by Hope* for the examination of the gnostic influence upon the common view of salvation meaning “going to heaven when you die.”

40 Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 75–76.

41 Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 290.



to be ‘vicegerents.’ That is, they were to act on God’s behalf within his world.”<sup>42</sup>

Wright’s corrective argumentation is extensive, yet here, I summarize how he sees the impact of this framing of the gospel that is in cogent continuation with the Hebrew Scriptures and results in reconciliation for a *covenant of vocation*. Wright states:

The vocation in question is that of being a genuine human being, with genuinely human tasks to perform as part of the Creator’s purpose for his world. The main task of this vocation is “image-bearing,” reflecting the Creator’s wise stewardship into the world and reflecting the praises of all creation back to its maker. Those who do so are the “royal priesthood,” the “kingdom of priests,” the people who are called to stand at the dangerous but exhilarating point where heaven and earth meet.<sup>43</sup>

What I value in Wright’s approach is the cogent cohesion with the Hebrew Bible and the resulting logical and theological outcomes of this perspective. Wright challenges the early church’s Platonist depreciation of the material world, i.e., God’s good creation, and he presents the gospel as lived out in a covenanted relationship that results in vocational action, including creation care.<sup>44</sup> If the Protestant heritage, with which I align, held such a view since the Reformation, I believe that there would have been more theological challenge and faith-motivated stewardly action in response to the environmental degradation, especially since the industrial revolution.

Now, how does this *covenant of vocation* ecotheological framework intersect with transformational pedagogy? While transformational pedagogy was described with Slavish and Zimbardo’s principles above, in an ecotheological framework that integrates faith, there is an identifiable power that enacts transformation. Within a Christian theological framework, the power for transformation is ultimately the Holy Spirit. According to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit can empower the followers of

42 Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 102. Note that this concept is contingent with worship, which is regrettably footnoted here because of the limits of this essay. “But that is only possible and can only escape serious and dangerous distortion when worship precedes action. Only those who are worshipping the Creator will be humble enough to be entrusted with his stewardship. That is the ‘covenant of vocation.’”

43 Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 76.

44 Hilary Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*, Reprint. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 22–49. See Marlow’s overview of Platonic thought in Origen and Augustine, the anthropocentrism in the Middle Ages, as well as the marginalization and/or utilitarian perspectives of creation among the Reformers.



Jesus with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (John 14:12–16; Eph 1:18–20).

Here, I am not advocating for normative student learning outcomes or prescriptive understandings as to how students should be transformed. These would be an abuse of the instructor’s power and undermine the freedom of the Holy Spirit. However, I ponder what would transformative pedagogy look like when intersected with this ecotheological framework of a covenant of vocation that is empowered by the Holy Spirit?

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL IN THEOLOGICAL HIGHER EDUCATION**

In *theological* higher education, I align with people of faith who recognize that there is a spiritual dimension that is beyond the capacity of instructors to control and, also, it would be unethical to abuse the instructor’s power that requires or even endorses normativity. Thus, I adapted a model that I learned from Bill Grace, the Founder of the Center for Ethical Leadership in Seattle, WA, USA. The model is creating “gracious space,” which is intentionally inclusive, and for me—teaching in the Wartburg Theological Seminary context—this gracious space also is inclusive of the Holy Spirit’s facilitation of transformation.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps some academics are uncomfortable with language that refers to the Holy Spirit. Yet, here’s the crux for me: we are in an “urgent and existential threat posed by climate change,” as stated by Judge Yuji Iwasawa of The International Court of Justice.<sup>46</sup> The greatest problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and we need a transformation. So, I am encouraging a learner-centered ecotheological education that facilitates gracious space—into which the Holy Spirit can be invited—in order that we respond to our common home on fire.<sup>47</sup>

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL PEDAGOGY**

One simple method of transformational learning is to get beyond a focus on cognitive student learning outcomes for each lesson. Yes, we want our students to know key concepts (Slavish and Zimbardo’s Principle 1), but head knowledge will not necessarily optimize reflection that can nurture transformation.<sup>48</sup> I reiterate the transformative pedagogy of Slavish

45 “Gracious Space Toolkit,” *Center for Ethical Leadership*, n.d., <https://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space-toolkit.html>.

46 Martina Iginì, “Climate Change an ‘Existential Threat,’ Says World’s Top Court,” *Earth.Org*, 23 July 2025, <https://earth.org/icj-advisory-opinion-climate-change-an-existential-threat-says-worlds-top-court/>. Judge Yuji Iwasawa stated, “The consequences of climate change are severe and far-reaching. They affect both natural ecosystems and human populations. These consequences underscore the urgent and existential threat posed by climate change.”

47 Greta Thunberg, “Address at World Economic Forum: Our House Is on Fire,” *Archives of Women’s Political Communication*, n.d., <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2019/12/02/address-at-davos-our-house-is-on-fire-jan-25-2019/>.

48 I know that I should eat more vegetables, but that does not motivate a change in my behavior. This is where I see “walking



and Zimbardo, who identified three basic *principles* that were similar to these three categories: 1) cognitive, 2) behavioral, and 3) affective. In my Christian education pedagogy courses, I was taught to also include *affective* and *behavioral* learning outcomes along with cognitive ones.

- Principle 2: *Behavioral* learning outcomes have a focus on active and innovative learning that is done—as part of the lesson—that reflects the lesson’s main point. It starts to build—metaphorically speaking—a muscle memory or a practical equipping to be able to intentionally engage the world with the lesson content.
- Principle 3: *Affective* outcomes focus on stimulating and engaging emotional intelligences, such as empathy, awareness of self-motivations, and hope.

Most effective educators include aspects of behavioral and affective learning in the instruction, eager for students to get more than theoretical knowledge out of their course. Yet, when analyzing a course’s assessment strategies, cognitive assessment strategies are dominant. Below, I provide sample application strategies for behavioral and affective learning outcomes. Identifying these affective and behavioral outcomes—in addition to the cognitive—helps to develop a stronger holistic strategy for each lesson and course assessments.

## Application

To integrate the above discussions, I now demonstrate examples of how I have applied Slavish and Zimbardo’s principles for transformational learning in theological education in both Sweden and the USA.

First, in a Swedish context, where the situation was more constrained due to accreditation standards that focus on the “scientific” or *cognitive* aspect in education, I pondered how to respect the regulations while also innovating for transformational learning. Unlike the USA, which has a firm requirement of student contact hours in a course, Sweden does not. Thus, I was the instructor who begged for the most amount of lesson time. In my courses, I would start each lesson facilitating learning for the “academic” portion of each lesson, and then, I would often end the class with 10 to 15 minutes left of a 90-minute session. With more lesson time than the average course, I was able to add a few minutes of reflection

by the Spirit” as seen in Galatians 5 is theologically the crux of the way forward to transformation.



time that did not impede the cognitive learning outcomes. I would state, “The academic portion of the class is done, you may leave. However, you are also invited to stay for a reflection time that is driven by you all, that can include your existential questions, faith issues, implications for ministry, and might engage reflection upon topics X, Y, or Z from our lesson today.” I would make it clear that nothing from the reflection time would appear on an exam, so there would not be any consequences for leaving, and some would leave. Many students told me how they appreciated it. On occasion, if I did not finish the academic content and we did not get to the reflection time, then I would hear the students’ disappointment. This reflection was a way to engage learner-centered exploration of affective learning in gracious space that provided more possibilities for transformational pedagogy.

Another strategy I used was learner-centered creative projects with presentations to the entire class at the end of the term. As students are not limited in their freedom of speech in the classroom, the presentations offered broader perspectives. Previously, in the class, I demonstrated a model of “seeking to understand” that I adapted—again from Bill Grace—for setting a framework for constructive conversations and mitigating conflict that might arise from student viewpoints.

I first developed the learner-centered project-based assessment in the American context. For a portion of the course points, students could choose to work independently or collaboratively on projects from a “buffet of learning” list of ideas. Alternatively, students could propose their own project that described their cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning outcomes with a mutually agreed upon assessment, as well as a personal reflection paper. Students often engaged in projects that aligned with behavioral learning outcomes that resonated with their professional goals.

The student projects were presented in the class to the other students. If there were creative, musical, or visual art projects, the other faculty with these areas of expertise were kind enough to evaluate a short recording or an image of the contribution according to a basic rubric. If drawing in other faculty members is not an option, another grading strategy I used was collaborative grading (which aligned with Swedish accreditation goals) where students filled in an online form using a personal device. All the students evaluated each presentation according to specific rubrics. As this learner-centered pedagogy began as part of a grant, evaluation of the project demonstrated: 1) students appreciated engaging the course content in ways that are meaningful for them personally; 2) students eagerly welcomed a diversity of learning styles; and 3) students



from different backgrounds valued the respect of diversity and “safe” ways to explore challenging theological concepts.

In the American context, with opportunities for integrating faith content, I would include one course assessment that focused on affective learning outcomes. This exercise was curated to provide a “gracious space” where each student would write a reflection paper, choosing from several prompts that engaged affective learning outcomes. For example, one prompt could be a personal reflection upon hope and climate anxiety in response to class readings and discussions.<sup>49</sup> These papers were graded as “pass” or “no pass,” as long as it was turned in and met the basic expectations of length and reasonable engagement. The objective was to provide time for personal reflection on affective aspects of the course that the student felt free to share with the instructor. I made sure that students knew that I was not going to grade these based upon my expectations or any sense of normative grading rubric. These reflection papers provide an opportunity for affective learning with content that would not appear on a cognitive-focused exam.

In my experience, these affective and behavioral aspects are great for applying collaborative and student-centered learning methodologies that foreground the students’ perspectives that expand the conversation.<sup>50</sup> A holistic approach avoids pitfalls on the left, where rationalism limits gracious space for a theological imagination empowered by the Holy Spirit, while also avoiding the pitfalls on the right, with tendencies toward normative or prescriptive modes that violate freedom of conscience.

Applying Slavish and Zimbardo’s principles for transformational learning that intersect with a covenant of vocation ecotheological framework, I plan to take into my next ecotheology course this project-based assessment. Since the idea of a “carbon footprint” was developed by Ogilvy & Mather, a public relations firm working for British Petroleum, or BP, this diabolically brilliant scheme reinforces the accountability of individuals to consider their responsibility—and guilt—for the climate crisis.<sup>51</sup> Yet, the primary sources of greenhouse gases are government policies and corporate or state-owned entities. Just 57 companies are responsible for 80 percent greenhouse carbon emissions since 2016.<sup>52</sup> So, my affec-

49 Beth E. Elness-Hanson, “Ground of Being: Reading Psalm 37 with the Maasai,” in *Responding to Climate Crisis: Hope at the Margins*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey and Norah A. Martin (Bloomsbury, 2026), Chapter 8. See my analysis of climate anxiety and biblical hope in this essay.

50 Maryellen Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, 2nd edition. (Jossey-Bass, 2013).

51 Pam Reynolds, “The Truth About Carbon Footprints,” *Conservation Law Foundation* 5 May 2025, <https://www.clf.org/blog/the-truth-about-carbon-footprints/>.

52 Jonathan Watts and Jonathan Watts Global environment editor, “Just 57 Companies Linked to 80% of Greenhouse Gas Emissions since 2016,” *The Guardian*, 3 April 2024, § Environment, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/04/just-57-companies-linked-to-80-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-since-2016>.



tive and behavioral learning outcomes would ask students to apply the course's *cognitive* ecotheology content to develop a small group project that engages in *public policy* work. Since we cannot recycle our way out of the climate crisis, the project is to develop a means to mitigate the super carbon producers.<sup>53</sup> There are local chapters of Citizens' Climate Lobby around the world for resources to consult. The students' project portfolio would include: 1) developing their ecotheological framework for their project based upon the course content (cognitive) and their values (affective), 2) writing a report of their developed strategy for practical participation in public policy (behavioral) with a self-assessment of their own engagement, and 3) end with a self-reflection (affective). These portfolios would be presented to the entire class with time for plenary discussions.

For educators interested in transformational pedagogy, I suggest gathering a couple other like-minded colleagues to join in encouraging each other and sharing ideas in a monthly lunch meeting. This was a helpful model for my collaborative coworkers and me when we were being intentional to develop learner centered teaching methods in our required introductory Bible and theology courses at Trinity Lutheran College. With several of us using innovative approaches, the students in the core courses were nurtured in a milieu that facilitated transformative learning.

For departments or academic deans, consider implementing 10-minute peer teaching sessions to present in faculty or department meetings, as I experienced at Trinity, where we were able to share ideas and learn effective teaching strategies from others who knew our educational context. If there is an opportunity to secure a small grant for training in transformative learning with an expert pedagogy coach, as we had at Trinity, the funds can support designated time for faculty development of transformational learning pedagogy. If appropriate, academic deans or department heads can foster revisions of student learning outcomes that demonstrate holistic engagement of head, heart, and hands. Then, the course assessments can provide more opportunities for intentional transformational ecotheological education.

53 Ciara Reyes-Ton, "We Can't Recycle Our Way Out of the Environmental Crisis," *BioLogos*, n.d., [https://biologos.org/?post\\_type=articles&p=19665](https://biologos.org/?post_type=articles&p=19665).



## Conclusion

Ecotheological education can be a facilitator of the spiritual transformation needed to address the climate crisis's greatest problems of selfishness, greed, and apathy, yet the academic context matters. Even where accreditation frameworks are more constrained, there can be innovative ways to incorporate affective and behavioral learning outcomes that can facilitate a gracious space of transformational learning. Where the contexts can be adapted through engaging a theological imagination, I advocate for a gospel-centered framework that includes the ground of transformation, the Holy Spirit, as a means for responding to the urgent and existential threat of our common home on fire.

## Bibliography

- Association of Theological Schools, n.d. <https://www.ats.edu/>.
- Bäckström, Anders, Ninna Edgardh Beckman, and Per Pettersson. *Religious Change in Northern Europe: The Case of Sweden*. Verbum, 2004.
- Board of Directors. "Mission & Vision." *Wartburg Theological Seminary*, n.d. <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/mission-and-vision/>.
- Brueggemann, Walter. "The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology." *The Book That Breathes New Life: Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology*. Fortress, 2011.
- Chalfonte, Liam, and Sadie Roraback-Meagher. "It's Time to Level the Playing Field between Athletics and Academics." *The Tufts Daily*, n.d. <https://www.tuftsdaily.com/article/2024/05/its-time-to-level-the-playing-field-between-athletics-and-academics>.
- Chapman, Samantha. "Email: Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ," 20 August 2025.
- Curwood, Steve, and James Gustave (Gus) Speth. "We Scientists Don't Know How to Do That." <http://Winewaterwatch.Org/>, 5 May 2016. <https://winewaterwatch.org/2016/05/we-scientists-dont-know-how-to-do-that-what-a-commentary/>.
- Elness-Hanson, Beth E. "Ground of Being: Reading Psalm 37 with the Maasai." Pages 11–26 in *Responding to Climate Crisis: Hope at the Margins*, edited by Carol J. Dempsey and Norah A. Martin. Bloomsbury, 2026.
- Elness-Hanson, Beth E. "The Fruitfulness of the Vineyard Metaphor: Isaiah 5 and Beyond." Pages 69–95 in *Metaphors in the Prophetic Literature of the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*. Edited by David Davage, Mikael Larsson, and Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer. Vol. 35 of *Journal of Ancient Judaism - Supplements*. Brill Schöningh, 2023. <https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/64526>.



- European Commission. “Ontological Bridges for Climate Change Mitigation in Maasailand | OBCCMM | Project | Fact Sheet | HORIZON.” *CORDIS* | European Commission, n.d. <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101065810>.
- Felter, Kirsten Donskov, Jonas Idestrom, Tone Stangeland Kaufman, and Fredrik Saxegaard. *Pastoral Entré: Rapport Fra Forskningsprosjektet Pastoral Learning Practice*. MF KOM / MF Vitenskapelig Høyskole, 2025.
- “Folkhögskoleförordningen (1977:551),” n.d. [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/folkhogskoleforordningen-1977551\\_sfs-1977-551/](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/folkhogskoleforordningen-1977551_sfs-1977-551/).
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. Continuum, 2004.
- “Gracious Space Toolkit.” *Center for Ethical Leadership*, n.d. <https://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space-toolkit.html>.
- Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575–99.
- Hedenius, Ingemar. *Tro och vetande*. A. Bonnier, 1949.
- Igini, Martina. “Climate Change an ‘Existential Threat’, Says World’s Top Court.” *Earth.Org*, 23 July 2025. <https://earth.org/icj-advisory-opinion-climate-change-an-existential-threat-says-worlds-top-court/>.
- Jansson, Anton. “‘A Swedish Voltaire’ The Life and Afterlife of Ingemar Hedenius, 20th-Century Atheist.” *Secularism and Nonreligion* 7 (2018): 4. <https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.98>.
- Lappalainen, Jonna Hjertström. “The Formation of Thinking.” *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics* 7.1 (2020): art. 1, pp. 10–33. <https://doi.org/10.3384/confero.2001-4562.200616>.
- Luther, Martin. “Article IV. Of Justification.” *Book of Concord*, 2019. <https://thebookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/article-iv/>.
- Marlow, Hilary. *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*. Reprint. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Merzel, Cheryl R. “Pedagogy for Transformative Teaching and Learning.” *Pedagogy in Health Promotion* 9.4 (2023): 231–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23733799231208392>.
- Nasrin, Taslima. “Then What?” *Dhaka Tribune*, 26 November 2014, Online edition. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/87381/then-what>.
- Nessan, Craig, ed. “Twelve Pastoral-Diaconal Practices.” Wartburg Theological Seminary, May 2021. <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/12-pastoral-diaconal-practices/>.
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. “2023 NWCCU Handbook of Accreditation.” NWCCU, 4 March 2025. <https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/lcp7r49i8409za7bt0jeqx0zbpf89eyi>.
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. “Standards.” NWCCU, 2020. <https://nwccu.org/standards/>.



- Reyes-Ton, Ciara. “We Can’t Recycle Our Way Out of the Environmental Crisis.” *BioLogos*, n.d. [https://biologos.org/?post\\_type=articles&p=19665](https://biologos.org/?post_type=articles&p=19665).
- Reynolds, Pam. “The Truth About Carbon Footprints.” *Conservation Law Foundation*, 5 May 2025. <https://www.clf.org/blog/the-truth-about-carbon-footprints/>.
- Routon, P. Wesley, and Jay K. Walker. “Student-Athletes? The Impact of Intercollegiate Sports Participation on Academic Outcomes.” *Eastern Economic Journal* 41.4 (2015): 592–611.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107.1 (1988): 3–17.
- Segovia, Fernando F. “Criticism in Critical Times: Reflections on Vision and Task.” *JBL* 134.1 (2015): 6–29.
- Slavich, George M., and Philip G. Zimbardo. “Transformational Teaching: Theoretical Underpinnings, Basic Principles, and Core Methods.” *Educ Psychol Rev* 24.4 (2012): 569–608. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-012-9199-6>.
- “Startpage - Swedish Higher Education Authority.” Text, n.d. <https://www.uka.se/swedish-higher-education-authority>.
- Sveriges Riksdag. “Kommittédirektiv 2018:15: Konfessionella Inslag i Skolväsendet,” De 2018. [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/kommittedirektiv/konfessionella-inslag-i-skolvasendet\\_h6b115/](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/kommittedirektiv/konfessionella-inslag-i-skolvasendet_h6b115/).
- Thunberg, Greta. “Address at World Economic Forum: Our House Is on Fire.” *Archives of Women’s Political Communication*, n.d. <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2019/12/02/address-at-davos-our-house-is-on-fire-jan-25-2019/>.
- UNESCO. “Five Questions on Transformative Education.” *UNESCO*, 20 April 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/five-questions-transformative-education>.
- Universitets och högskolerådet. “Lagar och regler som styr den högre utbildningen.” *UHR.se*, 27 March 2019. <https://www.uhr.se/publikationer/lagar-och-regler-for-hogre-utbildning/>.
- Watts, Jonathan. “Just 57 Companies Linked to 80% of Greenhouse Gas Emissions since 2016.” *The Guardian*, 3 April 2024, § Environment. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/apr/04/just-57-companies-linked-to-80-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-since-2016>.
- Weimer, Maryellen. *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*. 2nd edition. Jossey-Bass, 2013.
- “Weird and Weirder.” *Magic Numbers: Hannah Fry’s Mysterious World of Maths, Series 1*. BBC Four, 5 July 2023.
- Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. HarperOne, 2008.
- Wright, N. T. *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion*. HarperOne, 2016.
- Zachhuber, Johannes. “Theology as Rationalisation of Religion: The Case of the Nineteenth-Century Research University.” In *Rationalization in Religions*, edited



by Yohanan Friedmann and Christoph Marksches. De Gruyter, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110446395>

**Dr. Beth E. Elness-Hanson**, Associate Professor (Centre for the Study of World Christianity and Religion), VID, Norway and Lecturer in Old Testament and Pastoral Theology (Exegetical Theology) Johannelund School of Theology: Uppsala, Sweden.