



BETH

BETH Bulletin 2026

No. 04

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Co-workers in God's Revelation Based on Habakkuk 2:14: Theological Foundations for Christian Librarianship and the Mission of God

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1. Introduction

Contemporary discourse in library and information science (LIS) has often proceeded on the assumption that the professional practice of librarianship can be understood in largely neutral terms. The core commitments of librarianship, such as intellectual freedom, equitable access, and knowledge organisation, are frequently presented as universal and self-evident, independent of any particular philosophical or theological framework. Yet this assumption has been increasingly challenged. As Herold (2001, 4–5) argues, librarianship is shaped by philosophical assumptions about knowledge, truth, and value, while Kirkland (2021) contends that appeals to neutrality can function to avoid controversy despite the fact that libraries inevitably operate within particular ethical and value-based frameworks.

These critiques raise important questions for Christian librarianship. If neutrality is untenable, then the relationship between faith and professional practice cannot be reduced to a private conviction alongside a supposedly neutral public role. Rather, librarianship must be understood as a vocation shaped by deeper commitments concerning truth, knowledge, and the flourishing of humanity.

This article argues that Christian librarianship may be theologically construed as participation in the economy of divine revelation. Drawing upon the eschatological vision of Habakkuk 2:14, ‘the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,’ it proposes that librarians function as co-workers in God’s revelatory mission through the interrelated practices of preservation, proclamation, and facilitating the reception of theological texts. By integrating biblical theology, theological reflection on vocation, and LIS scholarship, this article offers a constructive account of librarianship as participation in the *missio Dei*.

2. Habakkuk 2:14 and the theology of Revelation

2.1 Context and the dynamics of Revelation

The book of Habakkuk emerges from the historical context of a period of profound socio-political instability and theological crisis, most plausibly situated in the late seventh-century BCE during the rise of Babylonian power (Roberts 1991, 86–88). The prophet’s lament (Hab. 1:2–4) expresses anguish over injustice and divine silence, raising urgent questions about God’s governance of history. Distinctively, Habakkuk utilises a dialogical structure in which the prophet addresses God directly, thus underscoring the relational and communicative nature of revelation. Divine response does not immediately resolve the crisis, but reframes it within a broader temporal horizon, emphasising that divine justice unfolds according to God’s purposes.

A pivotal instruction is given in Habakkuk 2:2: ‘Write the revelation; make it plain on tablets.’ This command highlights the transmissible character of revelation. As Roberts (1991, 103) notes, this written format ensures that the revelation may be preserved for future generations and communicated beyond its immediate temporal and spatial context. Revelation is thus both received and entrusted.

2.2 The Eschatological Vision of Knowledge

Habakkuk 2:14 provides the theological climax of the book’s vision, expressing god’s ultimate purpose that the earth be filled with the knowledge of his glory: ‘For the

earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.’ This imagery conveys both totality and certainty. Bruce (2009, 869) interprets the verse as expressing the certainty of the belief in the ultimate, universal manifestation of God’s glory. The metaphor suggests comprehensive saturation; nothing will lie beyond the reach of this knowledge.

Crucially, the Hebrew term *da‘at* (דַּעַת, knowledge), derived from the verb *yada* (יָדַע, to know), denotes more than cognitive awareness but refers to relational and experiential knowledge. Goldingay (2022, 143–44) argues that this knowledge involves recognition of YHWH’s sovereignty that will then reshape both perception and allegiance. The verse, therefore, envisions a transformative encounter with divine reality.

With this eschatological future on the horizon, revelation is thus situated within a dynamic historical process that is oriented towards the ultimate universal recognition and knowledge of God. The instruction to record the vision also implies that human action and participation play a role within this unfolding process.

2.3 Revelation as Mediated and Entrusted

Divine revelation is consistently mediated through human agents, texts, and communities. As Vanhoozer (2005, 147) argues, divine communication involves human authors as covenantal participants in God’s communicative action. Revelation is therefore not only divine in origin but also historically transmitted. This mediated character has important implications for the human role in the preservation, interpretation, and transmission of revelation, showing that God ordinarily works through people, texts, and communities to make divine communication accessible. The accessibility of revelation depends upon processes of preservation, organisation, and dissemination. Without such processes, revelation would not remain available across time and space. This insight provides a theological basis for understanding librarianship. If revelation is entrusted to human mediation, then those who steward its textual transmission participate, in a derivative but meaningful sense, in the economy of revelation.

3. Librarianship as Theological Vocation

3.1 Epistemological Commitments and the Limits of Neutrality

The critique of neutrality within LIS aligns with broader philosophical insights concerning the situated nature of knowledge. Budd (2001, 27) and Mai (2013, 235) emphasise that the organisation of knowledge reflects wider interpretive frameworks shaped by commitments to moral or value systems. Similarly, Day (2001, 5–7) demonstrates that systems of information classification encode cultural and ideological assumptions. From a Christian perspective, this critique resonates with a theological understanding of knowledge as oriented and pointing toward ‘Truth’. Smith (2002, 9–11) argues that Christian librarianship must recognise that it itself is grounded in a theological worldview that shapes its understanding of knowledge and meaning. This does not weaken professional commitments to fairness and access; rather, it situates them within a broader framework of responsibility. Neutrality is, therefore, replaced by a librarianship of reflective engagement that is grounded in theological conviction.

3.2 Vocation and Participation in the Missio Dei

The concept of vocation provides a constructive framework for integrating faith with professional practice. Volf (2001, 100–103) argues that human work participates in God’s ongoing activity in the world, thereby locating ordinary labour within God’s wider redemptive and eschatological purposes. Within this framework, librarianship may be understood as participation in the *missio Dei*. Bosch (2011, 10) emphasises that mission originates in God and that human agents participate as instruments of divine action. Librarians, by facilitating access to knowledge and supporting theological formation, contribute to this wider mission.

3.3 Theological Librarianship as Formative Practice

Empirical studies reinforce this perspective. Karp and Keck (1996, 41) describe the

theological librarianship as a profession that contributes to the intellectual and spiritual formation of its community. This formative dimension aligns with a theological understanding of the transformative effects of knowledge. Librarianship, therefore, is not merely instrumental but participatory, contributing to the shaping of communities in relation to truth.

4. Revelation, Preservation, and Proclamation: A Theological Framework

Drawing together biblical theology and vocational reflection, Christian librarianship may be understood through a threefold framework.

Firstly, revelation refers to God's self-disclosure, particularly through Scripture and theological tradition. Librarians facilitate access to the texts through which this revelation is encountered.

Secondly, preservation involves the safeguarding of these texts across generations. The continuity of theological knowledge depends upon the faithful stewardship of intellectual and spiritual heritage.

Finally, proclamation encompasses the dissemination of knowledge. Librarians support teaching, research, and communication, contributing to the wider spread of theological understanding.

These dimensions are not discrete but rather interconnected, forming a dynamic process through which revelation is mediated, transmitted, and received.

5. Implications for Professional Practice: Co-working within the Economy of Revelation

The theological framework outlined above calls for a corresponding reconfiguration of professional practice. The implications that follow arise from the claim that Christian librarians participate in the economy of divine revelation as co-workers.

5.1 Co-working in Revelation: Mediating Access

If revelation is mediated through texts, then access to those texts is theologically significant. Librarians participate in shaping this access through systems of organisation and discovery. As Olson (2002, 6) argues, classification systems structure the possibilities of access to knowledge. Within a theological framework, this structuring becomes a form of participation in the communicative economy of revelation. Librarians, therefore, function not as neutral intermediaries but as stewards of access, facilitating encounters with texts through which divine self-disclosure may take place.

5.2 Co-working in Preservation: Faithful Transmission

The command to record the revelation (Hab. 2:2) highlights the importance of preservation. Librarians participate in the faithful transmission of revelation through the safeguarding of texts. As McDonald (2017, 50–54) notes, the continuity of Scripture depended upon sustained practices of preservation within communities of faith. Today, contemporary librarianship continues this work. Preservation involves discernment, as Feather (2006, 32) observes, since selections are made according to value judgments. Christian librarians must therefore exercise theological responsibility in curating collections.

5.3 Co-working in Proclamation: Extending Knowledge

Habakkuk's vision implies the global dissemination of knowledge. Librarians contribute to this dissemination by supporting access, research, and communication. Borgman (2007, 47–49) highlights how digital infrastructures enable wider dissemination of knowledge. Through such means, librarians participate indirectly in God's communicative mission.

5.4 Co-working in Reception: Supporting Transformative Knowledge

Finally, librarians contribute to the reception of revelation. Knowledge of God, as

Goldingay (2022, 143–44) notes, is relational and transformative. Through guidance and support, librarians assist users in engaging meaningfully with texts. This role contributes to the intellectual and spiritual formation of communities (Karp and Keck 1996, 41).

6. Conclusion

Habakkuk's vision of a world filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord offers a compelling theological framework for understanding Christian librarianship. Far from being a neutral or a merely technical vocation, librarianship may be understood as participation in the economy of divine revelation. Through the interconnected practices of revelation, preservation, proclamation, and reception, theological librarians serve as co-workers in unfolding the knowledge of God. Their work sustains access to texts, preserves continuity across generations, and contributes to the dissemination and appropriation of truth.

This vision does not elevate librarianship beyond its proper scope but situates it meaningfully within God's redemptive purposes. Librarians do not generate revelation; they serve it. Yet in serving it faithfully, they participate in the realisation of the promise that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

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