

Lecture 6- "American" Culture (10, cont.); Cultures, Christianity & "Other" Religions (11)

"[The phenomenon known as New Religious Movements (NRM's) has] arisen in direct relation to the Christian missionary enterprise and can be found throughout the world. Four preliminary observations may be made:

**NRM's are a fruit of the modern mission movement.*

**Although these movements were long ignored or misunderstood by missionaries and mission-founded churches, they have become a permanent presence worldwide.*

**Much of the earlier prejudice was the result of ignorance.*

**As has been emphasized, these NRMs are the fruit of cross-cultural mission, but they are an unintended fruit.*

-Wilbert Shenk, Changing Frontiers of Mission, p59

Key Terms

New religion; religious plurality; religious pluralism

Lecture Objectives

- Describe the issues and challenges of new religious movements relative to the spread and translation of the Gospel.
- Describe the context in which much Gospel work takes place around the world and how that might help American believers address a changing culture.
- Provide a refined description of your own understanding of your relationship to the church worldwide in your Gospel work.

"American" Culture

Continued from Lecture 5

I. "Americans" as People

II. "The American Dimension of the Missionary Movement" (Walls, 221-240)

- A. Uchimura and "American missions"
- B. Rufus Anderson, et al
- C. The frontier and expansionism
- D. Voluntary association
- E. Money
- F. Church and state
- G. Common sense
- H. An American Christianity
- I. A changed world

III. Cf. Stanley Hauerwas. *After Christendom? How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian are Bad Ideas*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991 & 1999. (from the new Preface)

One of the great problems [for U.S. Christians]...is that many of the words used in Christian speech have become common. As a result, too often we have lost the oddness of Christian speech because we assume we are adequate speakers because such language is so familiar. The challenge is to rediscover how what we say as Christians forces a reconfiguration of our lives in order that we might see the world as God's good creation.

Take, for example, the word church. We usually think we know what we are talking about when we say 'church.' ...[But] the church is not simply a "voluntary association" that may be of some use to the wider polity, but rather is that community constituted by practices by which all other politics are to be judged....The church must be reclaimed from the politics of liberalism that would make the church

part of the 'private' realm. In short the challenge before us as Christians is to be a politics that is an alternative to the politics of exchange that otherwise dominates our lives. (5-7)

The crucial divide in our time is not—as is often claimed—between modernity and post-modernity, but rather when the church is no longer able to shape the desires and habits of those who claim to be Christian.... The challenge, quite simply, is how we as Christians can narrate such a world on our terms rather than the world's terms. (8)

The church seldom has 'a will to change,' but rather righteousness is forced on us by a gracious God. 'Will,' at best, names our willingness to accept what is given. That is what I think is happening to the church in America. We are dying from our accommodationist strategies to be a successful church in America. But in that dying we are rediscovering possibilities of faithfulness we otherwise could not have imagined...I believe God is about forcing the church in America to rediscover we are God's church. (10)

How...do we go on in a 'multicultural society?' My answer is very simple—we go on by going on. That, moreover, is not a bad way for Christians to have to learn to survive in a world they once thought was 'theirs.' Indeed it is my hope that the Christian recognition that the world is not ours, that the world cannot be made safe, that there are no solutions, may make us the imaginative people God has called us to be. Learning to live without answers, learning to live after Christendom, Christians will hopefully discover ways to survive that may be not only surprising for our own lives but also of service to our non-Christian sister and brother. Given the God we worship we have no reason to expect less. (12)

IV. Cf. William A. Dyrness. *How Does America Hear the Gospel?* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989. pp. 16-17, 57-58.
(See Appendix C for related readings)

Cultures, Christianity & "Other" Religions

I. New Religious Movements (Shenk, 59-84)

A. And mission initiative (72-73, 59-68)

B. And missiology

1. Ecumenical challenge? (84. Cf. Mullins' *Christianity Made in Japan*)
2. Processes of church growth (83)
3. Primal societies (80-81)
4. Re-visioning of theology (78-80)
5. Precursors to contextualization (75-77)

II. Reckoning with Religious Plurality/Pluralism (Ramachandra) (GWM II)

A. Help from outside the West

B. The scandal of Jesus

III. Historical Paradigms of Mission – The Middle Ages and Roman Catholic Missions (Thomas)

A. "Adapt pagan temples"

B. Women in mission

C. "Compulsion or persuasion?"

D. de Las Casas, et al

E. Xavier