

Social Issues; Ecclesiology

Our Father, thank You that we can serve You by Your grace and Your mercy. We praise You that You are the Lord and that You are good. We know and are sure that You do know all that happens, You understand, You care, and You are the one who rules. We praise You, O God, for Your Word. We thank You for Your abiding presence with us by Your Holy Spirit. We thank You for evidence in our own hearts and lives around us and in fulfillments of Your promises that we see in history and in our own day. We are assured of Your promises for the future. We thank You for Your faithfulness and Your commitment to continue to work at redeeming this world. Thank You again for calling us into Your service. We ask that as we meet together that You would guide and help us. Thank You for other classes that are meeting now. We pray for Your guidance there as well. We are thankful for those who pray for us here, who support us financially, and who are concerned about how we become better equipped to serve You. We are glad that we are a part of the wider body of Christ. As we meet together, we ask again for Your guidance and Your help in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are on topic 25, "Evangelism or Social Issues." One question I gave you for the readings is to consider the matter of the "word-and-deed" paradigm. How does Shenk react to the word-and-deed ministry paradigm, and how does he deal with it? He says that it should be both. What else does he say, particularly at the end of his chapter under the last heading, "Beyond Word and Deed"? We are to focus on the kingdom, which is a continuing paradigm that he has. He would say that focusing on the kingdom would be a more unifying paradigm. It is inadequate to focus on one or the other; you need both. Beyond that, by focusing on the kingdom, we need to focus on the whole—God's new order, God's kingdom. Shenk wants our view of what God's mission in the world is and what our ministry is therein to be more seamless. I saw him in a meeting and asked him about this personally. I told him that some students who read this chapter felt as though it was a needless critique or semantic point to say that we need to get beyond word and deed when that paradigm seems to encompass everything. His reply was, "On the one hand, that is fair enough." However, he thinks insofar as those categories are still distinct categories, and even though we might try to carry those two buckets together, they are going to spill out differently. And, we need something that has them mixed together in one bucket. That is my analogy of what he said. He wants a more theological, theoretically unified vision of the kingdom of God to move beyond that.

That is an interesting point, and how, therefore, to deal with that becomes something to consider. I do not think that we should therefore drop the paradigm of word and deed. Those of us who use that paradigm mean what Shenk and others are saying. Part of what using that framework of word and deed is doing is seeking to overcome some of the bifurcations that have resulted from the history as he has outlined it, especially the past two or three centuries in the West (as in the wake of the Enlightenment thought). There has been a wedge driven between the real, observable, scientific, material world and the more ethereal, undefinable, value-laden, religious, ethical world. The word-and-deed ministry, the need to be about mercy ministry and evangelism together as part of one Gospel ministry, is very important. The need to have a word-and-deed paradigm seeks to overcome that difference, which is a real divide for us. You can trace it back to a material-spiritual divide in Greek thought and certainly in modern thought. It is not just in Western thinking. You can see in much of the modern Christian world that same divide between social ministry and evangelistic ministry. In a place like Japan, the divide has been very clear. Evangelicals are attempting to bring them back together. Along with Shenk, I have heard a number of non-Western evangelicals—whether from Africa, Latin America, or Asia—say that some of the paradigms of word and deed are not as seamless (unified) as they would like them to be. Perhaps

they do not have the same intellectual heritage as many Western evangelicals do. So, figuring out how to recognize that and constructively work with it is, in my opinion, the constructive solution to the matter.

In Ethiopia and other certain non-Western settings, many Christians think that if something is non-Christian, non-Spiritual, or non-religious, then it is therefore evil. That thinking can go along with a pietistically oriented worldview that sees spiritual and religious things as good and proper and those that are worldly to be off-limits. Then, if you couple that with the challenge that many in the non-Western world have faced working through the Gospel in recent centuries that came to them via the West and the sometimes accompanying disdain that has been held by those who have brought the Gospel for their indigenous cultures, then there can be the added challenge of dealing with what is “non-Christian, non-spiritual, and indigenous to our settings.” How to see the wider relationship of the Gospel and kingdom to everything that we are becomes an added challenge. So, that whole dynamic of what is indigenous in how it is viewed is very important. I may have mentioned a Doctor of Ministry student here doing a doctorate dissertation on worship in Mexico. He is writing about how most evangelical, Presbyterian churches in Mexico are working through the issues of music and worship. According to this student’s research, only a very few would even consider the possibility of employing traditional Mexican music in worship because of its evil associations. So, that becomes an extra connection to that challenge.

I remember hearing a story from a friend years ago. I am not trying to question what he did, but the thinking behind it was interesting and illustrative. He had been working as an engineer. He said, “I got weary of working on projects and products that were not eternal. What is eternal are people’s souls and the Word of God, and I want to do something of value for that which lasts for eternity.” With that reasoning, he joined a Christian organization to work in evangelism and discipleship. Again, I do not want to question how God led him, *per se*, but I wonder about the thinking behind his decision. Saying, “What is temporal is not valuable, but what is eternal is” is laden with some misunderstanding that those of us with a more covenantal, Reformed worldview would want to question. What God wants us to do and calls us to do as a part of redeeming the whole Earth is a part of what His mission is all about.

Let us move to topic 26, “Personal Undoing.” I want us to discuss what happens in cross-cultural living and experience and how one can undergo the experience of being ripped apart, feeling lost, and then being reshaped into a new person. Sanneh points out that “Encountering the reality of God beyond the inherited terms of one’s culture reduces reliance on that culture as a universal normative pattern. A fresh standard of discernment is introduced by which the essence of the Gospel is unscrambled from one cultural yoke in order to take firm hold in a different culture.” “Those who, like Paul, felt the raw sharpness of the break with the past were constrained to interpret it as having occurred by the action of a God whose power exceeded one cultural expression of it.” These quotations are from readings you did earlier in the term.

Recently I heard the testimony of a North American who had gone to a very different part of the world on a short-term trip. You will have heard these sorts of testimonies, and perhaps you have even given one. He said that he had no idea how limited his view of the world was or how limited his view of God was until he went to this particular setting with Christians who were different than he was and who worshiped differently than he did. It was difficult for him to put words to his thoughts. He began weeping as he told us, “It just exploded me and exploded my experience of God.” It is that sort of almost indescribable experience that I want to consider together under this title of “Personal Undoing.” I had no idea what we were getting into when we moved to Japan. There are the obvious things of culture adjustment—learning how to eat and learning how to handle your shoes. A missionary colleague and I who had each been there for just a little while were on a train. Neither of us could read or speak Japanese very well. On some of the long-distance trains in Japan, they bring carts down the aisle and sell

you different things. We bought what we thought was lemonade, but it was not. We just laughed and said, "We cannot do anything! We really do not know anything." There are points like that that you have to laugh just as a matter of survival. However, as you are going through it, you cannot control it. You want to try to control it often times just to try to hang on to yourself. However, it is something that God takes you through in a way that is really scary at times, because you do not know the person that you are becoming. Also, this new environment is genuinely new, and it is managing you; you are not managing it. There are times when you are lost, indescribably lost. In Saint Louis, there are still times that I feel lost. (They say it takes about two years to feel comfortable in a new place.) I will be driving along and have that indescribable feeling, and I will say, "Why am I here?" When there are other languages involved, it compounds that feeling and makes the adventure that much more acute. You really do get shaped into a different kind of person. One of the best words I know is that your instincts get changed about any number of things—about politics or war. Your patriotism and other things get shifted somehow. This is what I mean about this unraveling or undoing that comes about in that cross-cultural experience with any human being and perhaps in an acute way that involves this intentional Christian living in ministry. [Professor Jennings invites students from the class to share their experiences.]

[A female student shares]

Before going to Mexico, I saw myself as a very relational person who liked to spend time with people all the time. However, when I went there, spent time with them, saw them in their context, and learned the way they did things, I realized that I was astonished by how much more communal and family-oriented they are. One example of something I had to get used to was in the context of a small party at someone's house. Here in the United States, you go in and say hello to the host and then go and talk to whoever you see that you know. You would spend your time with those people the majority of the time. But, in Mexico, you introduce yourself to every person in the house as soon as you arrive. It is the same way when you say goodbye. You do not just say goodbye to those you are standing with, but you go and say goodbye to everyone. That is just one small example of how they are always thinking of the whole group rather than individuals. So, while in this culture I was pretty relational, I had to start over again there. I had to begin seeing the group, because I was very focused on the individual and myself. If I went to an informal, casual meeting with a soda, they would think, "Where are the sodas for everyone?" At first, I thought they were just joking, but I quickly learned that if you arrive somewhere with food, you better have enough for everyone. That is just the way things are there. They are very relational.

[A male student shares]

One of the biggest things for me in Argentina was getting used to time. I went crazy, because if we had a meeting at 8:00, I would show up at 8:00. However, they may not come until 9:00. At first, it was hard for me not to take it personally. For instance, Argentina is very European, so they eat dinner between 8:00 and midnight. An Argentine friend would say, "Come over to our house for dinner tonight. Let us eat early. So, come at 9:00, and we will eat at 10:00." That was early for them, because they might not eat until 11:00. I was so hungry that it was hard for me to concentrate. Another example is that the church might have a dinner and announce that dinner will be at 8:00, but they do not serve you until 10:00. However, it does not seem to bother anyone. I was the only one bothered. You can throw your watch away in that culture. I cannot say that I every fully adjusted. Also, the social part of greeting others was a difficult adjustment. For instance, in Argentina, men hug women, women hug men, and men hug men. Men kiss both women and men to greet them. I did not mind kissing the women, but it was hard for me, as a man, to get used to kissing men on the cheek. However, I have been back in the United States for two years after being there for 20 years, and I have found it to be very cold. In Argentina, I worked as a church planter and directed a Bible school. When I walked into the office,

everyone greeted me with a kiss. So, I felt very cold coming back to the United States, and at times it has even been kind of cold. In Argentina, they have a national drink called mate, which is an herbal tea. It is in a cup with a metal straw. You pour a little hot water in it, drink some, and pass it around for everyone to drink from the same cup. There are about 35 million people in Argentina, and probably 34 million of them drink mate. The thing about it is what happens with mate. You get such interaction and discussion with everyone. It does not matter if you are in an executive meeting or if you are just sitting in the grass with friends. Everybody does this. At first, I did not care for the mate, but I realized that I liked what happened when I was with people who were drinking mate. If you did not drink the mate, you were kind of an outsider.

[An international student shares]

My testimony involves visiting the United States of America. The culture here is quite different from ours. I would want to adjust just two things that have been disturbing me during this time. When I arrived here, the first thing I noticed was the way people greet one another. I would see a student just say, "Hi" to a professor and then go on. The student would not take time to consider whether he was talking to a subordinate or a superior. It even happened with the president of the college. Students can call him by his name without using his title. One day, when my class began, I saw one of my professors pushing his books to class on a cart. I ran to try to help him push the cart. He tried to refuse my help, but I insisted. Then, I pushed the books to class. After class, I took the books back to his office. One professor asked me, 'Are all teachers treated that way in Nigeria?' I told her, 'Yes, we are supposed to give respect to our teachers.' Everybody at Covenant College remembered that a student from Nigeria once pushed a professor's books to his office. The following month, the provost of the institution called me after hearing about this. I told him, 'That is what we do in Nigeria.' I did this during that summer and then during the rest of my time at school, but I was looked on as someone who did not know anything. These things disturbed me very much. I understand that it is the culture, and cultures are different. In Nigeria, we give respect to our superiors. You must view it differently, otherwise I would assume that you would give respect to your superiors in this way. However, you may not think that pushing a cart filled with books for a professor shows respect at all."

[Professor Jennings]

Thank you for sharing your experiences. The cross-cultural adjustments that need to be made are significant, and what the experience does to you personally is significant. Again, when another language is involved, it can have a terribly significant effect on your relationship with God. A number of Japanese Christians have told me that when they moved back to Japan after becoming a Christian in the United States, "It is as though I am almost worshipping a different God here." Now, language is not the only factor there. There is a lot wrapped up with that kind of a statement. However, sometimes the cultural location of your relationship with God can be that significant and deep.

The question has been asked, what role does orientation play? Orientation can certainly be helpful for adjusting expectations and getting some coping strategies. It is not always necessarily a bad thing when someone falls apart. However, perhaps it is more constructive if you can help people cope to the point at which they can at least be functional. By the grace of God, through the help of others, and with some coping strategies, they can remain functional as a human being and allow God to shape them into a new hybrid sort of a person (culturally speaking). So, orientation can be helpful in giving some guidelines in what to expect and not to expect and how to cope. It can also help prepare someone emotionally to give in to the process of undergoing the change that happens. Orientation can also, at times, be too narrow and result in restricting how someone will move into a culture and respond and learn.

Let us move into the next topic about cross-cultural relations. A good resource to have is *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, by Lingenfelter and Mayers. This book goes through sets of corresponding values that differ according to culture, including some of the ones we have mentioned in this lesson. For example, there is one about time. For many of us, beginning on time is very important, and it guides the way things operate. In fact, it is so ingrained into how we operate that if people are late to a meeting, it really bothers us. Beginning on time is so ingrained in us that it is nerve-wracking when things do not happen “on time.” The book also talks about other values such as demonstrating respect and the definition of a family in different cultures. The recommendation from the authors is that when you move cross-culturally, you need to become a “150 percent person” in which you recognize that you are going to be limited as an outsider. You can become, at most, 75 percent of the target place, but you are going to lose some of your own cultural heritage as well. The model or composite figure would be 150 percent. The book suggests that the model was Jesus Christ, who was a 200 percent person. He was perfectly able to become incarnate in who He was and perfectly able to be the second person of the Trinity as a model for us. It is an interesting book, and I recommend it to you to give some labels on some of those postures of understanding cultural differences simply as cultural differences. In our day, it is very popular in this environment to only allow respect for difference and not critique of difference, and that is where we need to be very, very careful. It is tricky. When you are going across cultural boundaries, you are a learner, and you need to be respectful of the culture. However, at the same time, we do share common humanity, there are common standards, and the Gospel does bring critique. There is right and wrong. As Christians, we need to have both of those postures in view.

I want to look a little bit at Shenk's chapter, “The Wider Context of Conversion,” beginning on page 85. He has some very helpful things to say to us about what is happening in religious conversion in general and in Christian conversion in particular. In the first paragraph on page 86, he contrasts what Catholic and Calvinist missions did in East Africa in terms of wanting to develop a whole new kind of a civilization there in comparison to the British and German evangelical Protestants who were more focused on the individual conversion of people. He concludes that paragraph by saying, “Whichever approach was taken, there was always a sociopolitical dimension of conversion in Africa.” It was always present. There was a re-centering that had to occur with people whether it is to Islam, Christianity, or traditional religion. It was a complex of loyalties and identity that was involved. It was not as simple as saying, “Turn from this religious faith to this religious faith and that is all that is involved.” That is what Shenk is trying to argue. He sets forth a number of postulates, and I want to walk through these with you. They are in italics, beginning at the top of page 88.

His first postulate is this: “So long as a people's worldview provides coherence and reassurance amid life's vicissitudes, they are unlikely to convert to an alternative worldview. Conversely, rapid cultural change or social crisis is a *sine qua non* of conversion on a wide scale.” Generally, that is true. When people are undergoing change, they are open to new things, and that is why demographic studies, for example, of church planting point you to areas where people have moved there and are new, which is going to be associated with an openness to change. If you go into areas where things have been the same, there is not much upheaval, and things are set, there is not going to be a likelihood of religious conversion.

Shenk's second postulate is in respect to cultural systems (see the top of page 89). He says, “The capacity of a cultural system to exert control over its populous is a key determinant of the extent to which an externally sponsored conversionist initiative will succeed.” You have something coming in from the outside seeking conversions. How that cross-cultural system controls its inhabitants will be

related to the success of religious conversion growth. I would suggest to you that this postulate has a great deal to say as to why Islam is growing and in all likelihood will continue to grow in North America. In North America, so many things are up-for-grabs. Many people are being uprooted. There is little consensus about what is right and wrong, who God is, and all those sorts of things. People need to belong, and Islam presents a cohesive, sensible, socio-religious, cultural way of life that is going to be attractive to nomadic North American people. Islam, therefore, will continue to grow and not just among any one type of Americans but among all different kinds of Americans.

Third, Shenk talks about colonialism in the non-West. He says, “Conversion in the colonial context became stereotyped as religious change under duress. The coercive dimensions were not overt but were nonetheless real. Becoming a Christian colony was perceived as insuring one’s economic and professional security.”—And, that often was the case—“In other instances, refusing to convert was a way of demonstrating one’s loyalty to the nationalist cause.” An interesting twist on this postulate is what happened in the first half of the twentieth century in Korea. Japan had colonized Korea officially from 1910. In the meantime, the Christian church had grown extensively throughout Korea. Those who resisted Japanese-colonial rule and who pushed hard for independence from Japan were often times leaders in the Christian movement. Christianity provided an alternative to the Japanese rule that was there. It helped strengthen Korean nationalistic independence. Refusing to convert to the Japanese imperialism that was being imposed via colonial rule was a way of demonstrating a loyalty to the Korean nationalist cause that often times was aligned with the Christian faith. It had been closely connected with being Korean. This is a different twist on this phenomenon.

On the bottom of page 90, Shenk speaks in terms of modernization. He says, “For traditional cultures under threat from westernization or modernization, the Christian message proclaimed by the missionary contributed to the sense of personal and social fragmentation. As the nineteenth century progressed, the missionary’s message increasingly reflected the fragmentation of Western culture, and conversion became focused on the spiritual.” Here again, he is talking about that more fragmented, modern, Western world through which the Christian faith was brought into so many settings. In contrast to a more seamless, traditional view, they had a compartmentalized view. The expectation among many Western missionaries was that it was just a spiritual conversion. They did not realize that there was a whole life being threatened because it all comes together in one package.

I have a brief, personal testimony on this point from my own thinking and experience in relation to ministering in Japan. I had a Japanese colleague who kept telling me this my first few years there. When I first went to Japan, I preached the salvation, Gospel message—you believe in Jesus, and you are saved. This colleague told me, “That is fine to a point, but what they are hearing is not what you are saying, even though you are getting the words right. It became increasingly evident to me that Shenk’s postulate that he mentions here was right. It was a case in which what I was communicating could not just be a religious message only. It needed to be a comprehensive message. So, my notion changed of what ministry in Japan and cross-cultural missions efforts with respect to Japan needed to be. I drew this out for myself. I could go back to my files from that time and show you how I drew it out for myself so that I could picture it. I realized that it needed to be a comprehensive, whole presentation of a Christian way of life whether it was with respect to politics, social behavior, family, or whatever. Later, I began to see how that is not really recognizing the reality of the way God comes and has the Gospel translated within that setting. It is not as though He jerks all this away and puts something totally new in. It is difficult and painstaking to see the Gospel and Christian way of life re-entangled into a whole new setting. So, my view then changed, and it remains to be much less definable to where the Gospel is articulated and lived out in new and fresh ways in new settings in consultation with other settings. We are not sure how things are going to be worked out, fleshed out, understood, changed, or altered. We do not know how that will

be fleshed out over generations, but God is at work in leading and growing this plant in His own way. Yes, the comprehensive nature is there but not a whole new system that is brought in.

I can illustrate that another way. When we were leaving Japan, our church had a going-away celebration for us. One woman came up to us and said, "You know, what meant more than anything else to us that you guys did as a family was to have your children attend our local schools, because that showed us that you are part of us. You are right here with us." I had a missionary colleague who is a very good friend of mine say, "I think that you putting your children in local schools was wrong, because it said to the Japanese Christians that it is all right to have your children in a pagan educational system." Now, I do not want to get into views of educating children, because I know different people have very strong views about home-schooling or Christian education. I will just tell you up front that my wife and I do not have terribly strong convictions about that. Maybe we should, but we do not. There were contrasting worldviews happening between my colleague and me. The view that was coming to me that I was condoning a pagan system really was the view of needing to bring in a whole new system and root out what was there because it was entirely bad. However, I would disagree with that. I would be interested in revisiting that argument a few years from now. I do not know how that discussion would go. My point is that there is a whole way of life that is involved, and how you approach it is important.

Let us look at "Multiple Facets of Conversion" on page 91. Shenk says, "A conversionist message will appeal to a variety of motives. While some motives may be rejected, motives that arise out of a sincere yearning for life-change can be used as bridges into a comprehensive application of the Christian message to the needs of converts." You do not want to present the motive, "Convert to Christianity. We will teach you how to read, and you will get a great job and be set for life." That is not a great motive to present for conversion. However, a need for their family life to improve may not be the central, basic need of converting to Christ, but it is directly related. Shenk continues, "For the many peoples who have changed religious affiliation without a vivid or religious experience and yet have matured, seeking to appreciate their pilgrimage within this wider framework lends validity to their experience." It is an ongoing pilgrimage. I do not want to deny that there may be a point that you can define as when you have gone from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. In its full aspect, conversion is in many ways an ongoing, multifaceted experience.

I have been asked if indeed it is true that where Christianity is seeing the greatest growth in terms of conversions is among those of the so-called primo religions instead of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. Might that not lead to a world where there are no longer primo religions anymore but just the big religions? Does that suggest that we as Christians need to work on our evangelistic efforts among Muslims, etc? It is hard to predict what will happen demographically. Just because statistics and demographics indicate that Christian growth is occurring adherents of primo religion should not mean that we therefore relent from our evangelistic focus on others or from being better equipped. There is a lot of energy being poured out to Muslims not just since September 11 but even before that. As Christians, we definitely need to think, work, pray, and labor zealously toward work among Muslims. There has been a fresh focus during the past generation or so on the 10/40 window, which recognizes that that geographic region is primarily Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist but, in fact, has the fewest Christians. This focus that has been brought out, and much of the Christian world is helping us labor more intentionally.

Let us look at a few more comments from Shenk. On page 93 in the second paragraph he says, "And herein lies the weakness in evangelical theology. Because it stressed so forcefully the role of the individual, it couched all its thought about strategy and tactics in individual terms. It was asserted repeatedly that the converted individual would ensure social and political change. Collective action by

the church qua church was ruled out-of-bounds. Evangelicals, therefore, found concerted efforts in addressing social issues difficult to contemplate.” This relates to our previous topic about dealing with social matters. Evangelicals are more and more concerned about social matters, but there is still a divide, if you will, or a line between social relief and even development in being concerned about structural change.

Speaking of the past 100 to 150 years in Christian circles, it has generally been mostly the liberals (not the evangelicals) who have been concerned with social matters. Again, many non-Western evangelicals will say, “We have to be concerned about this as well.” Take, for example, the macro-economic structure of the affluent northern hemisphere and the poor southern hemisphere, relatively speaking, in the matter of foreign debt. We, as Christians, need to be concerned about that. I concur with that viewpoint. I do not concur with the view, “Bring about structural change, and the world is going to be a happy place.” That is much too simplistic. But to have this as a part of the comprehensive view of what God’s mission is all about seems to me the only right view. We need to do this without taking away the proper, biblical, evangelical stress on the individual. Shenk, not I, implies that you take away the need for individuals to come to faith in Christ and be called to repentance in faith. That is certainly not the whole story but part of the story.

Shenk’s conclusion is on page 102. He says, “First, conversion is a considerably more complex process than is usually described.”—Fair enough.—“Second, rather than starting with imported models and assumptions about what conversion involves, assessing what is happening needs to begin with the sociopolitical context in which conversion is taking place.” What is happening within the context? What is happening with the converts? Is there change in moral and ethical behavior on individual and social levels? This could also apply in answering the common question, “If there are so many Christians in Rwanda, why did that slaughter take place?” This is a legitimate question to ask. The demographics of who is Christian, who is converted, what is happening there, how much time has evolved, and how we understand that come into play here as well.

I gave you a few readings from Kosume Koyama. Dr. Koyama was a Japanese missionary to Thailand in the 1960s. He was there for about eight years. Since then, he has been teaching in the United States. He is a stimulating writer who has written a number of things. His best-known work is entitled *Water Buffalo Theology*, which Covenant Seminary’s library has a copy of. This work stems from his own personal undoing. He went to Thailand with a package but realized that what these farmers who worked alongside the water buffalo needed to see and hear and what conversion meant for them looked a little different than what he went in thinking. His work, *No Handle on the Cross*, draws on a similar analogy that often times ex-patriot missionaries will walk into a new setting with their briefcases, so to speak. They open their briefcases and say, “Okay, here it is. This is the truth. Take it or leave it.” He suggests that instead of thinking in that situation that you have a handle on the cross and have it all figured out that you need to let the cross have a handle on you. This is true especially when you are moving cross-culturally. You need to be in a posture of humility and learning. While I do not concur with everything he says and how he puts it, I think that Dr. Koyama has a great deal of helpful material for us in regard to instructions in moving cross-culturally. I hope your reading was helpful and stimulating to you in that regard, especially as he talked about what has happened in Asia and how Christians there have had to deal with how the Gospel has been presented.

I am moving ahead quickly, because we have guest speakers coming in next time to talk about some of the following topics. Topic 28 is on ecclesiology. I have given you a couple of topics from Shenk basically saying that within the past 200 years, the main motif was soteriology—what does it mean for someone to be saved? However, there was not much reflection on the question, “What is the church?”

There was emphasis on seeing churches grow and seeing them organized and what that meant. But, what is the church? Theologically speaking, what is it all about? This was not given a great deal of thought, and that was the setting for the modern missionary movement. I have included some writings from Paul Hebert. Dr. Hebert was a missionary in south India. He taught for many years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. One of his most helpful books is *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. He is a very stimulating writer. I appreciate the piece he did about balancing out evangelism, church, and kingdom. He talks about how we need to avoid reductionism in which we focus only on evangelism, church, or kingdom at the expense of the others. He has triangular pictures showing how you need to have all of them. He does not use covenant terminology explicitly, but I think that is what he is talking about when he refers to a covenant Lord as the king ruling throughout his kingdom. He uses this illustration to guide our understanding of the place of the church and evangelism with respect to individuals and the wider kingdom aspects—public issues that come into play. This will help our understanding of that the church is.

Often times, if you focus only on the kingdom and lose sight of who the king is, the Christian distinctiveness of what you are about gets left out. You become aligned with all other good causes—political, social, or whatever they might be—because that is bringing in the kingdom of God. That is much of what happened in the 1960s. Evangelicals saw that and withdrew from some wider Christian circles because revolutionary movements were bringing about liberty from economic and political oppression among some of these countries and they thought, “That is what the kingdom of God is all about.” But, where was the Christian distinctive role there?

In closing, let me just make a quick remark about ecclesiology and missions in Ephesians, Colossians, Titus, and 1 Peter. It strikes me that in these letters both Paul and Peter are writing to the church, to the collective people of God. As they write, both are thinking of individual people in the church whom they mention on occasion and whom they have known personally, but they are also thinking of the collective people of God. In these letters, as you will recall, both Paul and Peter mention responsibility to political authority, families, and work. Often times in looking at these letters, those sociopolitical responsibilities are viewed as the responsibilities of the Christian believer out in the world. However, in thinking ecclesiology, I would like to suggest that Paul and Peter are thinking of the church of the people of God in a scattered sense but also as the people of God together as organically related and corporately identified amidst those social responsibilities. So, in thinking about how we as the people of God operate in the world (and this could come down to one's own personal priorities), it is not as though we have only one role in our lives. There is a sphere of government, a sphere of family, a sphere of work, and a sphere of church. In the first five-and-a-half chapters of Ephesians, Paul talks about each of these spheres. In 1 Peter 2, he starts talking about government and then work and family. Thinking sociologically, this is true. Theologically speaking, it seems to me that in addition to this, God has placed His church in the world to be about His mission work within these various spheres of life. I do not think that that is simply a semantic matter, nor do I think it is simply a mind game that you convince yourself of. It is a reality of where God lives, where He is at work, and how we understand and do church/mission work in the world as His people.

You can think about those things. Next time, we will move on to urban mission and ministry in Saint Louis, and we will have some guests with us—Barry Henning and Bill Yarborough from New City Fellowship—to lead us in those discussions. Thank you. God bless you.