

The Hans Denck Lectures

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The globalization of the church is raising important questions regarding the nature and diversity of human beings and their sociocultural contexts. It is also raising questions regarding the nature of theology, the church, and mission. This meeting is an example of the future in which we gather from many different parts of the world to hear the Word of the Lord together.

We will examine how different parts of the church at different times in history have looked at divine revelation and its relationship to theology, the church, human cultures, mission and spiritual warfare. We will compare the views Anabaptists with of people having with a Modern worldview, and those with a Post-Modern worldview.

By **Modern**, we mean societies and people that accept the worldview that has given rise to contemporary science, industrialized technology, telecommunications, capitalism, and human centered individualism. It is a monolithic worldview that began roughly about 1800 and today is spreading around the world. It is the first truly global culture, and the most powerful culture today.

By **Post-Modern** we mean the growing reaction to Modernity which began to gain strength after 1970. It is an attempt to deal with cultural and religious diversity by affirming all of them uncritically. In Christianity, post-modernity is rapidly spreading across North America with the emergence of many different theologies such as African-American theology, feminist theology, liberation theology, and African theology.

By **Anabaptist**, we mean the theology and worldview that emerged in the Anabaptist movement in the 15th century in Europe and is today found in many Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. It provides an alternative to contemporary conservative Protestant (Modern) and liberal Protestant (Post-Modern) views of divine Revelation.

The discussion of the nature of revelation is particularly important in our day in the light of the global nature of the church and mission.

Lecture I.

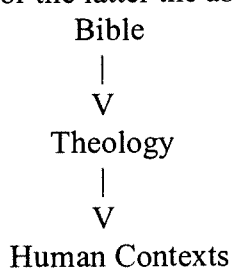
REVELATION AND THEOLOGY

The first area we need to reexamine is the nature of theology, and its relationship to theology. Theology is the foundation of our lives before God. It is the fundamental beliefs on which we act.

1. **Theology in the Modern Era:** Modern systematic theology emerged in the 18th to 20th century, shaped in part by the epistemological foundations of modern science. It sought to construct a single, comprehensive understanding of truth.

1.1 Literalism: Theology corresponds exactly to Scripture. Many western evangelical theologians before 1950 equated their theology with Scripture itself.

- they assumed that they understood clearly, and without bias what Scripture had to say.
- they rejected the idea that their interpretation of Scripture was colored by their history and culture, their personal experiences, or even the language they used.
- because they held to an exact correspondence between Scripture and theology, they claimed for the latter the absolute truth and certainty they affirmed for the Bible.



1.2 Theology is based on reason. Philosophical reasoning was used as the method for developing a theology.

- theology had little to do with feelings and responses. Faith was defined as mental assent to the truth.

1.3 Theology a single, unified picture of ultimate truth. Modern theologians see theology as a single comprehensive system of truth.

- theology must be comprehensive. It must explain all of life.
- all parts of a theology must be true for the whole of it to be true.
- unity is based on uniformity.

1.4 Theology is unaffected by the historical and cultural settings of the theologian.

- theology must be timeless and universal. What is true for you is true for me, and for India and for Africa.
- it is totally objective

1.5 We must begin with the correct theology or we will go astray. Theology is the mother of mission. Therefore we must spend much time on formulating true theology.

1.6 Theology is abstract and divorced from life. Theology is concerned with the ultimate structure of reality. It does not address our everyday problems, or the issues that arise in mission such as the spirit worlds of tribal societies. This leads to the divorce between theory and practice, between theology and application.

1.7 Disagreements lead to conflicts. Differences in theology led to conflicts and schisms. Each side accused the other of being wrong. Unity was possible only on full theological agreement.

1.8 Strengths. This position has a number of strengths.

- it has a high view of Scripture as divine revelation coming to us from outside our human social and cultural systems.
- it has a high view of Truth and absolutes. It rejects all relativism.
- it affirms the importance of theology as the basis for our thought and action. It reminds us that we must think theologically.

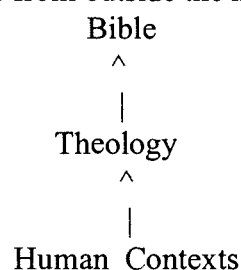
1.9 Weaknesses. This position has a number of serious weaknesses.

- it does not make a difference between revelation and theology. It ignores the fact that revelation comes from God, but humans create theologies.
- in its search for a system of timeless, unchanging truth, it ignores the importance of history and human beings as the basis of divine revelation. The Bible is first the history of God's acts in human beings who live in specific cultural contexts.
- because it sees theology as unchanging, it ignores the progressive nature of divine revelation. It also overlooks the fact that our own understanding of God should grow as we mature in our faith and knowledge.
- this view is extremely individualistic and denies the importance of the church as a community of faith.

2. **Theology in a Post-Modern Era.** With the growing awareness and appreciation in the west of other cultures and their differences, a new type of theology emerged.

2.1 Theologies are human understandings. It became increasingly clear that all human knowledge systems, including science and theology, are rooted in specific human contexts - both cultural and historical. There is no culture-free theologizing.

- this has led theologians to tie all theology to human settings, and to see it as bound by their cultural and historical contexts. They rejected the fact we know divine revelation that comes to us from outside the human context.



2.2 Theologies are relative. There was a recognition that there can be many theologies: western

theology, Indian theology, African theology, Latin American theology, Liberation theology, feminist theology, and so on.

- because all theologies are tied to human contexts, we cannot judge one true or another false. All theologies are valid expressions of human thought. We need to affirm them all. The result is a growing relativism in the field of contemporary theology.

2.3 Theology arises out of human experiences and feelings. Theology should not arise out of reason, but out of experience and feelings.

- we distrust rational theology as dead and arid. We want living experiential faith.
- the Bible is a book of peoples' searches for God, not of God revealing himself to them.
- we therefore tell our stories, and hear one another's stories.
- we must stress experience and feelings in our worship services, not theology as a rational system.
- because this position can no longer speak of 'Truth', it sees Christianity as based on personal experience. We can all give testimony to what we experience personally. No one can argue with that. Theology as a rational process is often seen as dry and dead. We need a religion rooted in emotions and inner feelings.

2.4 Disagreements lead to dialogue. Because all theologies are determined by their contexts, we cannot compare or disagree with them. We must affirm them all.

- we must avoid the ethnocentric tendency to judge theologies as right or wrong. All theologies are relative to one another.
- we must listen to all theologies sympathetically, and hear what they have to say to us.

2.5 Strengths. This view corrects some of the weaknesses of the first position.

- it recognizes that all theologies are influenced by human contexts. We must understand the context of the theologian in order to understand his/her theology.
- it reminds us that God reveals himself to us in the particularities of history and culture. Theology is not an abstract mental system. It must be tied to the lives of real human beings.
- it reminds us of the importance of experience and feelings in our Christian life and worship.
- it reminds us of the importance of the church as a community.

2.6 Weaknesses. This view has serious weaknesses.

- it loses sight of the divine nature of Biblical revelation. It reduces all theology to human search for God.
- it relativizes theology, and so destroys its claims to Truth.
- in the end it relativizes all religions, and denies that the Jesus of the Bible is the only way to salvation.

3. **Anabaptist View of Theology:** The Anabaptists have held that theology is our human understanding of divine revelation. We differentiate between the Bible record as

revelation, and theology which is our interpretation of Scripture, but we link the two. We see theologies as **maps** of the reality found in Scripture.

3.1 Theology is based on divine revelation. Therefore it contains objective truth.

- we see the Bible as an accurate record of God's revelation to humans, and therefore the source of divine truth. We are known as biblicists because we always go back to the Scriptures for answers to our questions, and to test our interpretations.
- we recognize that theologies are human attempts to understand the Bible. To the extent these theologies are based on a careful study of the Scripture, they are true. As Anabaptists we absolutize the Scripture, not our own theology. But we do hold our theologies strongly and are willing to give our lives for our understandings of Scripture.

3.2 We need to interpret Scripture in terms of its own categories. In interpreting Scripture it is important, as much as possible, to use Biblical categories in the analysis. If we introduced other categories, we are in danger of misunderstanding Scripture.

3.3 Theology is influenced by our human contexts. Therefore there is a subjective dimension to truth.

- we recognize that theologians are influenced by their own cultural and historical contexts in their interpretations of the Scriptures.
- we also need to know the broader context in which a theology is developed to understand and correct the biases that context introduces to the theology.
- we must understand our own cultural biases when we read Scripture and seek to correct for those biases.
- we must understand the cultural and historical contexts in which a passage of Scripture is located in order to understand how the writer and reader of that time understood it.
- we must constantly retest all theologies against Scripture

3.4 Theology is based on history.

- theology is rooted in the history of God's work and revelation in the history of human lives. That is what keeps it fresh, living and relevant.
- the basis of theology is therefore an interpretation of history. Human history gets meaning because it is closely tied to the cosmic story. Our biographies have meaning because they are part of a meaningful history.
- systematic theology is important, but rooted in historical theology. That is why we place a priority on Biblical theology over systematic theology.
- theology should be contextual. We must hear the Word of God in our particular contexts. Because contexts are different, we ask different questions. But because the Word is one, the answers are all based on the same truth.

3.5 Theology is divine truth humanly appropriated. We see theology not as an abstract system divorced from life, but as thinking biblically about real human situations. We need to bring the questions of real life to the Scriptures for answers. Theology must be tied to

life.

- hearing the Word of God calls for a response. God does not give his Word only to inform us. He calls for obedience. This involves beliefs, feelings and responses.

= **truth**: We believe theology has objective truth (it is tied to real facts of history,

and to true statements about God and his work), but theology should also be subjectively appropriated in our lives.

= **feelings**. Christian faith involves feelings and experiences. Faith involves not only truth, but also deep feelings.

= **obedience**. Christian faith demands obedience and transformed lives. Faith is our response to truth and feelings. It is to be obedient to the Word of God that we hear. It is not simply a mental affirmation of biblical truth or a feelings of God's presence in our lives. It is a call to living a life of obedience to that truth.

3.6 Theology arises out of life and mission. We begin with missions, not theology. As questions arise out of our missionary outreach, we theologize about them on the bases of Scripture.

- for example, in the book of Acts, sermons were not given as lectures. Something happened, the people asked what was going on, and then the preacher got up and explained what was happening.

3.7 Theologizing is a process.

3.71 **Phenomenology**: we study the human sociocultural and historical contexts:

= emic analysis. We seek to understand the peoples' contexts and views.

= etic analysis. We examine our own cultural contexts and views.

3.72 **Ontology**:

= we study the Scriptures in the light of their contexts and look for the underlying truths and principles of divine revelation.

= we test both the peoples' and our views in the light of Scripture.

3.73 **Missiology**: We gently take people from where they are to where they should be.

3.8 Disagreements lead us to study Scripture further together. When disagreements arise on theological issues, we are willing to admit that our own theological positions may be wrong, and go together to Scripture to test both theological positions against the biblical texts.

Lecture II.

REVELATION AND THE CHURCH

If we always read Scripture from the point of view of our own context, how can we know that we are hearing God's Word and not our own cultural voices?

1. **Doing Theology in the Modern Era:** Theology of the balcony.

- Constantinian era: 425 a.d.- present western church.
- See partnership of church and state. Church=religion, state=government
- during colonial expansion of state --> missions alongside, often seen as partners
- from a position of power: arrogance, western superiority specialized.

1.1 Church and organization: centralized, hierarchical, specialized.

- theology is done by experts. Because writing a theology is a highly developed skill, and it must be exact to be true, it must be done by trained specialists.
- we must have seminary trained theologians and pastors who know Greek and Hebrew. These schools must teach the leaders the existing body of truth, not to think for themselves.
- there is little room for lay leadership or lay participation.
- there was little room for ordinary Christians to read and interpret Scripture in their own particular historical and cultural contexts.

1.2 Individualism:

- personal salvation, for eternity
- little concern for 'social gospel'
- little concern for corporate sin.

1.5 Strengths. This approach recognizes the seriousness and difficulty of the theological task, and it seeks to preserve the truth in theology. It is true we need people who know the Bible in its original languages to help us interpret it correctly.

1.6 Weaknesses. This approach denies the priesthood of all believers.

- it gives Bible interpretation to the professionals, and makes the laity a passive community not involved in the theological process.
- it denies the importance of lay leaders and lay activity in the church. Consequently, it has great difficulty in raising up enough leaders to meet the needs of the church.
- it keeps the laity spiritually immature, and weak.
- Constantinian, reinforces hatred and ethnocentrism
- denies community and corporate sin

2. **Post-Modern Church.** Theology of the Person.

- anti-Constantinianism: Church of the Poor.
- stress solidarity, contingentization

2.1 Church as a club

- function of theology is not truth, but to build a sense of fellowship and community in a

- body of people, and so help them through life.
- the church is a religious community affirming its common values.

2.2 Homogeneous unit churches

- churches should be culturally uniform.

2.3 Kingdom of God

- equals our utopias: Marxist, Capitalist, etc. No King.

2.4 In missions each church should be autonomous. Each church should be totally self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Each should have its own theology. Each should evangelize its own land. Once a church is planted, the mission should leave.

2.5 Strengths. This view stresses the importance of feelings in Christian worship, and the importance of the church as a community of faith. It is not based on individualism.

2.6 Weaknesses. This view has serious weaknesses.

- it isolates churches in their cultural contexts, and denies their global nature.
- authority rests in experience, not historical facts. It lacks the frame of absolute truth and righteousness that theology provides.
- overlooks the fact that the poor are also evil, and oppress one another
- politicized the Gospel
- makes salvation only here and now, and only economic and political
- makes the Kingdom our utopias

3. **The Anabaptist Church.** Theology of the Street.

- anti-Constantian: Christian counterculture

3.1 Christ and His Kingdom, vs kingdoms of the earth

- starts with the King.
- then the Kingdom, the Church and Evangelism

3.2 Church as a countercultural covenant community.

- different kinds, but one family. A family of families.

3.21 Has a political dimension to it:

- suffering church (Matt 5:10-11,44; Gal. 6:12; Phil 3:10; Rom 8:11, 2T 4:5)
- nonviolent, prophetic church

3.22 Has a social dimension to it:

- reconciliation
- discipline Gal. 2:11, Acts 5:
- fellowship and unity

3.2 Hermeneutics belongs to the local church as a corporate process.

- we believe in the priesthood of all believers. All Christians, mature and immature, have a right to study the Bible for themselves.
- we believe that hermeneutics belongs to the **local** church, not to professional individuals. Every believer has a right to speak and a responsibility to listen as the church seeks to hear God's word for us in our present context.
- community hermeneutics corrects for our personal biases.
- it builds consensus and community.
- it makes theology relevant.

3.3 Hermeneutics belongs to the global church.

- churches in different cultures are encouraged to develop their own theological understanding of Scripture.
- church leaders from different cultures need to gather in dialogue to see to develop a global multicultural theology.
- this avoids culturally parochial biases.
- we need to learn also from the saints who have gone before. They are part of our global church.

3.4 There are checks against error in theologizing.

- the Bible as the revealed Word of God.
- the Holy Spirit who is in every believer.
- the church as a hermeneutical community. This includes not only the living but also the saints that have gone before us.

3.7 In mission national churches should work towards partnership and a global ministry together.

- we need to go beyond independence to inter-dependence.
- we need to work towards true partnership in the cause of the Gospel. All colonialisms must be eliminated from our structures and our attitudes. We belong to one worldwide body, the church. We join to minister to the lost and needy in every country.

Lecture III. REVELATION AND CULTURE

The early church saw itself as a counter-cultural community. It was an outpost of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdoms of this world. It was to be in the world (**archaon**), but not of the world. Consequently it expected persecution and was often charged with being anti-social and traitors to their nation and culture.

After Constantine (312 a.d.) Christianity was wedded to the Roman state to form

Christendom. The gospel became equated with western culture.

1. **The Modern Era - Christendom:** The modern era is a continuation of the Constantinian era. During its time the church brought the Gospel to the ends of the earth, but the modern mission movement had many flaws. God used the mission movement despite these flaws.

1.1 Christianity was equated with western culture= Civilization

Civilization

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Primitive, prelogical, pagan

- Calvin and the Reformed churches equated Christianity with the 'Christian State.' They sought to set up Christian governments and a national Christian culture.
- Luther saw the church and the state as partners in ruling the people. The church dealt with spiritual matters, the state with temporal and earthly matters such as civil government and war. It was the earthly arm of the church exercising justice on earth.
- many Americans saw America as God's chosen and blessed country responsible for evangelizing and civilizing the world.
- in the end, Christianity was also equated with capitalism and commercialism.
- to become Christian was equated with becoming culturally Western.

1.2 Other cultures are primitive, prelogical, uncivilized and pagan.

- if western culture was seen as good, other cultures were seen as 'primitive,' 'prelogical,' and 'pagan.'
- because other cultures were primitive and pagan, missionaries did not need to study them. They were to be replaced by Christianity and western civilization.

1.3 Ethnocentrism and arrogance of modernity. All other knowledge is foolish

1.4 Paternalism

1.5 Noncontextualization. Radical displacement.

- this era is characterized by non-contextualization.
- all traditional customs were thought to be pagan, and so had to be eliminated. There was nothing good in old cultures that could be preserved.
- the missionaries often assumed that the people would want Christianity and modern civilization when they really knew what these are.

1.6 Weaknesses

- colonialism, cultural conversion

- Christianity = western culture

2. **The Anti-Colonial Era - Post-modernism:** There was a growing reaction to colonialism in the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1950 this was a world-wide wave that led to the collapse of colonial empires and freedom for more than seventy new nation states. This anti-colonial movement was closely associated with the rise of post-modern philosophies that recognize and affirm the value of all cultures.

2.1 Differentiates into bounded cultures, and affirms all cultures as good.

- all cultures are good. We cannot judge them. To do so is to be colonial and ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is seen as the greatest sin.
- because all cultures and societies are good, evil lies only in individuals, or in demons that plague humans and force people to do their will.

Culture A

Culture B

Culture C

ETC.

2.2 Western culture is bad.

- it is the world oppressor. Its colonial legacy and its neo-colonialism in world economics and politics is the cause of poverty and oppression around the world.

2.3 Uncritical contextualization.

- because all cultures are neutral or good, we can contextualize the Gospel in them without fear of losing heart of the Gospel.
- our task is not to change cultures, but to call individuals to conversion in their cultures.
- conversion requires a minimum of change, and does not mean that new Christians should leave their old cultural ways. Faith is a private matter and does not involve challenging human social and cultural systems.

2.4 Acceptance of other religions.

- other religions, too, have truth in them. We cannot claim with arrogance and colonialism the uniqueness and superiority of Christ.
- we must learn from followers of other religions through **dialogue**, not seek to convert them.

2.5 We must show solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

- the poor and oppressed are innocent victims. We must stand with them in their fight against their oppressors, and against evil social structures.
- some see evil as demons that oppress people and keep them in bondage. These demons are sometimes seen as having authority over specific territories.

3. **Kingdom of God and cultures of earth - Anabaptist:**

3.1 All cultures have good in them.

- because humans are created in the image of God who is himself a creator, and because humans are the creators of cultures, we can find good in all cultures. We need to affirm this good, such as good music, art, family ties based on Christian love, and government when it fights oppression.

3.2 All cultures have evil in them.

- because all humans are sinners, the cultures they create are tainted with sin. We need to oppose such evil, both in individuals and in human social systems and cultures.
- we must judge all human endeavors not by the best that fallen sinners produce, but by the standards of the Kingdom of God, and what humans and human societies would have been had there been no sin.
- we must be angry and oppose sin wherever we see it, in all its form.

3.3 Christians should create counter-cultural communities.

- in Scripture, earthly cultures are referred to as **archaeon, sarkx**.
- we must learn to live in the world as good people, showing love and help to all.
- we must not become **of the world**. There must be an essential difference between Christians and nonChristians, and between the church and the societies of the earth. We are **resident aliens**. We are outposts of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- our ultimate loyalties are to Christ and his kingdom, not to earthly kingdoms. Therefore we accept civil disobedience if we are asked to go against our conscience.
- our weapons are always love and compassion, never violence and evil.

3.4 Metacultural grids

- enable us to judge cultures from outside any one culture. We are bicultural people. We are in the world but not of it. We live in this tension.

3.4 Gospel transforms culture.

- Gospel vs. culture: we must separate the gospel from western culture.
- Gospel in culture: the Gospel must always be put into cultural forms for it to be understood. We cannot bring it to people apart from culture and history.
- Gospel to culture: the Gospel is always prophetic and challenges all people and their cultures to change. This call is a true for western cultures as for nonwestern cultures.

3.5 Critical Contextualization: we believe that contextualization is an ongoing process in which a people hear the Scripture in their context and obey its calling. This involves three steps:

3.51 **Phenomenology**:

- first we must study the cultural context of the people.
- we must also study our own cultural context to see how it shapes our ideas.

3.52 **Ontology**:

- we must study the Scripture to hear God's word for us today.
- we must then test the beliefs and practices of the people in the light of the new.

3.53 Missiology:

- we must help the people move from where they are to where God wants them to be.

Lecture IV. REVELATION AND MISSION

The way we view revelation and its relationship to theology, church and culture profoundly influences the ways we do mission.

1. Colonial Era. The modern Protestant mission era begins about 1706 when Ziegebalg and Plutschau were sent to India by the Danish king.

1.1 Christianity and Western governments.

- often Christianity went abroad under the protection, and sometimes the sponsorship of western governments. The cross of Christ often came with the sword of the state. The people often saw Christianity as a partner in colonialism.

1.2 Christianize and civilize. Western Christians often equated Christianity with western civilization. Therefore, to become Christian, a person had also to become 'civilized' by adopting western culture.

- Western missionaries believed it their duty to teach the people how to live as civilized Christians.

1.3 Old religions and cultures had to wiped out.

- traditional religions and cultures were seen as all pagan and had to be eliminated.
- this led to the proclamation of the Gospel with little understanding of the people or their histories and cultures.
- new converts had to adopt western Christian beliefs and practices, and were generally seen as 'foreigners' in their own land.

1.4 Evangelism vs social gospel. Due to the Western dichotomy between Supernatural and Natural realities, Western missionaries often made a sharp distinction between evangelism and the social gospel. The conservatives saw the task of mission to be the otherworldly salvation of the lost. The liberals saw it as bringing salvation to people here and now through better lives. This split seriously weakened the witness of both groups.

1.5 Sender oriented communication. The communication of the Gospel was seen as proclaiming it publicly to the people. Success was measured in how many sermons a person preached, how many tracts he or she distributed, how many radio broadcasts were aired, and so on.

- little thought was given to what the people understood when they heard the Gospel.
- little thought was given to the indigenous ways in which the people communicated

religious messages.

1.6 Mission is what we do for God.

- There was much reliance on human planning and strategizing, and on human activity.

1.7 Strengths This era proclaimed the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and despite the ties to colonialism, it did plant churches in most countries around the world.

- despite the colonialism, there were many missionaries who valued the cultures in which they served, and dignified these by means of Bible translations, and writing good ethnographies on the cultures.
- the commitment and sacrifice of the missionaries during this era was great. Many laid down their lives for the Gospel. We rarely equal their sacrifice and dedication.

1.8 Weaknesses The close ties between Christianity and western governments was a great barrier that kept many from accepting the Gospel. The Gospel came with worldly power, not the power of the Holy Spirit.

- the foreignness of the Gospel kept young churches immature and dependent. This weakened them.
- colonialism was an oppressive system that greatly harmed many peoples.

2. The Anti-Colonial Era. As the evils of colonialism became more evident, and as people rose to claim their rights to rule themselves, a spirit of anti-colonialism spread around the world. This emphasized the right of each culture and nation to exist as an independent community. It stressed the autonomy of local churches around the world. It emphasized the need to see the world in terms of homogeneous groups with their own rights and independence.

2.1 Missions should come to an end. This spirit of anti-colonialism called for an end to modern mission outreach, particularly by Western churches. It called for local churches to evangelize their own countries, and not to depend on outside help.

2.2 Dialogue. There was a condemnation of the proclamation of the Gospel as colonial and arrogant. Missionaries and church leaders were called to dialogue with people of other religions, and to learn from them.

2.3 This worldly salvation. The focus in missions now turned from a call to repentance and ultimate salvation, to helping people to find salvation here on earth in their present lives.

2.4 Receptor oriented mission. To help people here on earth, we must know their felt needs..

- in communication, meaning was now equated with ideas in the head, not with outside perspectives or objective realities.
- in sharing the Gospel the focus was not on the message the missionary proclaimed, but on the message as it was heard by the people.

- missions need to start with the **felt needs** of the people it served, and meet those needs. Only then, was it assumed, would people hear the rest of the Gospel.
- missionaries need to **contextualize** the Gospel radically so that the people would understand and receive it. This often led to uncritical contextualization which the agenda and methods of analysis are set by the context or by the social sciences, and not by Scripture.
- new churches were encouraged to develop their own theologies, and there was little critique of these by theologians from other cultures.

2.5 Strengths

- this view affirms the autonomy and equality of churches in all cultures. There is no place for one church to rule over other churches.
- this view challenges the evils of colonialism and calls for justice and concern for all peoples.

2.6 Weaknesses

- there is a danger that if we start with the felt needs of the people, we will never deal with their real needs before God.
- in an attempt to not be colonial, we often are hesitant to proclaim the Gospel. in obedience to our Lord's command.
- in our emphasis on the autonomy of the church in each culture, we are in danger of reinforcing human divisions, and losing sight of the global nature of the church as one body in Christ.

3. **The Anabaptist model.** The Anabaptist vision provides a third alternative that is neither colonial or anti-colonial in nature. Rather it starts with a global view of God, the church and the gospel. It does not start with the view that the western church is the model church, or that autonomous national churches are the goal in missions. It sees the Gospel as a universal church, and the church as one global community.

3.1 The message is the Kingdom of God: The Anabaptists stressed the Kingdom of God as the central theme in missions.

- the Kingdom begins in evangelism, calling people to follow Christ and enter the Kingdom.
- evangelism must lead to the planting of living churches which are outposts of the Kingdom, and signs to the world of what that kingdom is like. These signs including praying and caring for the sick, standing with the oppressed, and condemning sin in every form, including the sin of oppressive human structures.
- the church should point to the coming Kingdom, and live in anticipation of the return of Christ. This is one of the key motivations for missions.

3.2 Therefore we preach and practice a whole gospel: We make no sharp distinction between supernatural and natural activities. All the acts of Christians should manifest the