

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US: HOW THE MODERN/POSTMODERN WORLDVIEWS HAVE SHAPED CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

It is important for us to understand how our theories and practices of missions have been shaped by modernity and now postmodernity so that we can work towards a more biblical model of missions in the 21st century.

I. THE WORLDVIEW OF MODERNITY

The modern worldview has been characterized by several dominant themes while exist in tension with counter-themes (Morris Opler 1957).

1. Natural-Supernatural Dualism:

Dawkins, Richard. The Blind Watchmaker.

Denton, Michael Evolution: A Theory in Crisis.

Johnson, Phillip. Darwin on Trial. InterVarsity Press.

Gilbert, James. Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Behe, Michael. Darwin on Trial.

1.1 THIS WORLDLY—other worldly

1.2 ANDROCENTRISM—theocentrism

- this worldliness vs other worldliness

1.3 MATERIALISTIC SECULARISM--spiritualism

Luckman, Thomas. 1967. The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society. NY: Macmillan. Pp. 35-39.

Berger, Peter. 1967. The Sacred Canopy. Garden City: Doubleday. pp. 105-108.

Berger, Peter, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner. 1973. The Homeless Mind. NY: Random House. Pp. 79-82.

1.4 MARKET ECONOMY AND CONSUMERISM—gift exchange and redistribution.

Eisenstadt, S. N., ed. 1968. The Protestant Ethic and Modernization. N.Y.: Basic Books.

Fox, Richard and T. J. Lears, eds. 1983. The Culture of Consumption. N.Y.: Pantheon Books.

Handy, Charles. Compassionate Capitalism.

Kuznets, Simon. 1966. Modern Economic Growth. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

McClelland, David. 1961. The Achieving Society. Princeton: Van Nostrand.

- Nef, John U. 1958. Cultural Foundations of Industrial Civilization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Toffler, Alvin. 1965. The Culture of Consumers. Baltimore: Penguin.
- Weber, Max. 1956. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons.

1.5 SCIENCE -- religion

The relationship between science and religion is seen in several ways

- 1) reductionism
- 2) dualism
- 3) stratification

1.6 PUBLIC--private split

- Newbigin, Leslie. 1986. Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- _____. 1991. Truth to Tell. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Snow, C. P. 1964. The Two Cultures and a Second Look. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The impact of the supernatural/natural dualism on the Western church and missions

1. The division of missions into 'evangelism' and 'social concern.'
 - this has led to the secularization of much of the world.
 - attempts to bring these two together have largely failed.
2. The denial of this worldly spirits: the 'flaw' of the excluded middle. This denial has led to split-level Christianity.
3. A focus on this-worldly well being and denial of the role of suffering and hardship in the Christian life.

My personal pilgrimage:

Supernatural/Natural Dualism:

Old: My old view was that reality is divided into the domains of Supernatural and Natural, and that Christianity dealt largely with the former, and science with the latter. This made it difficult to see God's hand at work in everyday life apart from miracles, or to take the reality of angels and of Satan and demons seriously in daily affairs.

New: My current view is that the Biblical division is between Creator [God], which leads to a contingent dualism: God as autonomous and eternal, creation as finite and continually dependent on the ongoing creation and providence of God. In this angels and demons are part of creation and therefore part of human affairs. Nature is not autonomous and run by natural laws. It is a contingent creation operating according to principles God place in creation to give it order and predictability. With out these at the level of the material world, meaningful life would be impossible. On the other hand, God can operate in unique ways without violating his principles because they are subject to him.

This view also takes the questions asked by folk religions seriously, and calls us to provide theological answers to these questions which are rooted in Scripture and tied to our formal theologies [systematic, biblical and missiological].

This World and Other Worlds:

Old: My old view was that this world is most important now and that I must focus on living meaningfully in it. Consequently, health, comfort and a 'good life' are important. The other world [heaven] is something I must think about, but it begins after death. [This reflects Max Weber's comments that Protestantism moved from an 'other worldly' to a 'this worldly' emphasis.

New: My new view is that the other world is the dominant worldview theme, and that this world is the subordinate or counter theme. This life is important, but it must always be lived with the realization that it is the 'stage' not the ultimate 'reality' and that when we move 'off stage' we enter eternal reality. The eternal reality therefore exists now in the Christian though the outer manifestation is this worldly roles and relationships.

2. RATIONAL POSITIVISM – traditional wisdom

Max Horkheimer and Thodor Adorno. 1991. The Dialectic of Enlightenment. NY: Continuum.

3.1 **SIGHT – sound**

Ellul, Jacques. 1985. The Humiliation of the Word. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Ong, Walter J. 1969. World as view and world as event. American Anthropologist. 71:634-647.

3.2 **DOUBT–faith**

- critical thought and suspicion vs trust in existing knowledge

Max Horkheimer and Thodor Adorno. 1991. The Dialectic of Enlightenment. NY: Continuum.

- schooling vs home schooling and apprenticeship

3.3 **OBJECTIVITY - subjectivity** “a photographic view of knowledge”

- positive knowledge is ahistorical and acultural. An outside view of the truth.

- there is a one-to-one correspondence between knowledge and reality.

* reality = knowledge = truth

* sense of absolutes

- the scientist is a passive recipient of knowledge which is value and feeling free

- the scientist is unbaised by his/her history and culture

- knowledge is additive: it seeks to create one grand unified theory (GUT) which is: 1) logically consistent, 2) powerful (potentially exhaustive) and 3) self contained

- disagreements lead to conflicts and attacks

3.4 **REASON – feelings and values**

3.41 **DIGITAL SETS** – analogical or ‘fuzzy’ sets

3.42 **CLASSIFICATION** – wholism

3.43 **ABSTRACT ALGORITHMIC LOGIC** – other logics

- vs concrete functional logic

- vs wisdom and heuristic judgments

3.44 **GRAND UNIFIED THEORY**– perspectivalism

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Impact of positivism on the church and missions

1. The emergence of systematic theology—theology as the queen of the sciences.
 - objective, absolute, acultural, ahistorical
 - divorced from affective and moral dimensions

2. A strong passion to help a needy world which motivated many in missions.
 - often tied with a cultural arrogance that saw others as “uncivilized,” “primitive,” “prelogical.”
 - Gospel often equated with western civilization. This led to the ‘cultural captivity of the Gospel’ by the west, and the foreignness of the gospel in other cultures.
 - the equation of faith with affirmation of a set of facts defining orthodoxy.

3. Rationalization of the Christian life, church and mission. Triumph of reason and truth over feelings and morality in life, church worship, and education.

My pilgrimage

Epistemology

Old: My old view was that science is based on positivistic realism, and that Christianity is based on idealism and faith.

New: My current view is that of critical realism as the foundation for both Christianity and science. This means that human knowledge is always partial and approximate, and never total and complete. Moreover, it holds that mystery is not simply a result of our currently imperfect state of knowledge and that it will decrease as our knowledge grows. It is part of the very nature of reality which far transcends our human abilities to understand that reality.

3. MECHANISTIC – organic:

- Berger, Peter L., Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner. 1973. The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness. N.Y.: Random House.
- Berman, Morris. 1981. The Reenchantment of The World. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Burt, E. A. 1932. The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science. N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Dijksterhuis, E. J. 1986. The Mechanization of the World Picture: Pythagoras to Newton. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (translated by C. Dikshoorn. Original 1950).
- Ellul, Jacques. 1964. The Technological Society. N.Y.: Vintage Books.
- _____. 1990. The Technological Bluff. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans.
- Farley, Edward. 1988. The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Howard, Thomas. 1969. Chance of the Dance. Wheaton, IL: H. Shaw.
- Pepper, Stephen. 1949. World Hypotheses. Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press.
- Stackhouse, Max. 1988. Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization and Mission in Theological Education. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Winter, Gibson. 1981. Liberating Creation: Foundations of Religious Social Ethics. N.Y.: Crossroads.

3.1 **HIERARCHY– equality**

- Dumont, Louis. 1972. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications. London: Paladin.
- Lovejoy, Arthur. 1960. The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea. New York: Harper Touch. First published by Harvard Univ Press in 1936.

3.2 **COMPONENTIALISM – wholism:**

3.3 **RULE OF LAW AND ORDER – relationships and transactions**

3.4 **AMORAL – moral**

4. INDIVIDUAL – group:

- Bellah, Robert. 1985. Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press.
- Bibby, Reginald. 1987. Fragmented Gods. Toronto: Irving Publishers.
- Bloom, Allan. 1987. The Closing of the American Mind. N.Y.: Simon and Schuster.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1988. Middle American Individualism. New York: Free Press.
- Henry, Jules. 1963. Culture Against Man. N.Y.: Vintage Books.

- Hsu, F. H. L. 1961 American core values and national character. In Francis L. K. Hsu (ed), Psychological Anthropology. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.
- _____. 1970. Americans and Chinese: Two Ways of Life. Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press.
- Inkeles, Alex. 1983., Exploring Individual Modernity. NY: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Lasch, Christopher. 1979. The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations. N.Y.: Warner Books.
- Todd, Emmanuel. 1985. The Explanation of Ideology. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Vitz, Paul C. 1977. Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.

4.1 AUTONOMOUS SELF – group

4.2 FREEDOM--RIGHTS - responsibilities, duty

DIACHRONIC WORLDVIEW

1. MYTH OF EVOLUTION AND PROGRESS:

- Berger, Peter L. 1974 Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change. N.Y.: Basic Books.
- _____. 1977. Facing Up To Modernity. N.Y.: Basic Books.
- Learner, Gerda. 19## Creation of Patriarchy. Oxford Univ. Press.
- 19##. Why History Matters. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Kuznets, Siomon.1966. Modern Economic Growth. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.
- May, Rollo. 1991. The Cry for Myth. New York: Dell Publishing.
- Wink, Walter. 1992. Engaging the Powers. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

2. MYTH OF REDEMPTIVE VIOLENCE

3. MYTH OF ROMANTIC LOVE

Table 3: A Comparison of Modern and Global Worldviews

Modern

Materialistic Naturalism

- mechanistic, deterministic,
- bottom up
- algorithmic logic, machine logic, computer calculators
- order, bounded sets
- general revelation

Segmented

- SN/N dualism,
- specialized and segmented lives

GUT

- reductionistic
- uniformity
- arrogance, acultural, ahistorical

Detached, Individual Human Centered

- divorce from emotions and values
- androcentric
- scepticism
- reason based

Hierarchy

- control, line and staff organization
- evolution

Global

Spiritual--material intertwined

- live in harmony with nature

- wisdom

Wholism

- spirits and humans interact

Complimentarity

- nonreductionistic
- metasystemic framework
- hermeneutics of suspicion, in culture, historical context.

Group Hermeneutics

- community check on biases
- theocentric [?]
- combine cognition, affectivity, valuations

Equality

- networking, partnership, mutuality
- divine history

IS THERE A HISTORIAL PROGRESSION?: *TRADITIONAL // MODERN // POSTMODERN // GLOBAL*