

Session 1
THE GOSPEL IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNITY

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 Abilene, Texas; May 2004

Mission is God reaching out to a lost world through his church and his messengers. They must understand both the Gospel and the human contexts in order to communicate the Gospel so that people understand and can believe. Here we will focus on the contexts of Modernity and Postmodernity, and communicating the Good News in these contexts.

I. EXEGETING HUMAN CONTEXTS

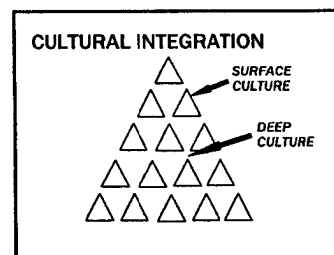
We will use the theory of 'worldview' to help us understand the fundamental nature of Modernity and Postmodernity.

1. The concept of culture and worldview

1.1 Definition: By 'culture' we mean the: *1) more or less integrated systems of 2) learned ideas, feelings and values 3) encoded in patterns of behavior, signs and products 4) created and shared by a community of people.*

- *ideas, feelings and values*: people think about things, feel about them, and respond to them.
 - **cognitive**: all cultures have systems of knowledge. Cultures are mental maps that provide people with an understanding of the world in which they live, the maps they also use for living in that world.
 - **affective**: Cultures shape the feelings attitudes and sentiments people have about things.
 - **evaluative**: Cultures provide the shared values, morals and allegiances people use to judge their world. more or less integrated systems:.
- *learned behavioral patterns, signs and products*: People's ideas, feelings and values give rise to their patterns of behavior, and the signs and products they create. Not all human behavior and products are part of culture. Only those that are patterned, learned and shared with other members of the community. Culture is learned and is distinguished from biologically instinctive behavior. It is transmitted from one generation to the next, and is cumulative. The patterns of behavior, symbols and products are shaped and shape the world in which people live.
- *more or less integrated systems*: Cultures are not random assortments of unrelated ideas, feelings and values. They are integrated into systems by which people conceptualize and respond to the world around them. For example, they have systems of ideas that deal with health and medicine, acquisition of food, and religion. Ideas,

behavior and symbols must be understood in the context of the cultural systems of which they are a part, and these are integrated in varying degrees into a single culture that the people understand, appreciate and value. This integration is rooted in assumptions about the nature of reality, about what is desirable and undesirable, and what is right and wrong. These core assumptions--the worldview--give meaning and credibility to the culture.



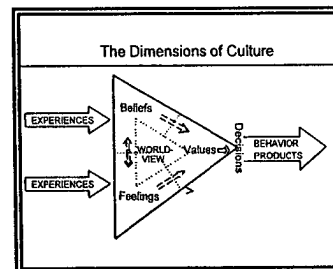
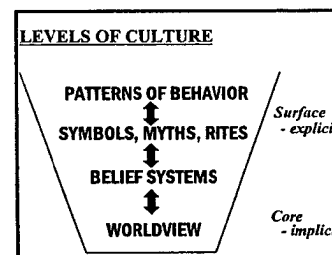
Each culture has in it a number of cognitive systems people use to conceptualize and respond to various areas of their lives. Thus they may have systems of ideas about health, economics and religion.

- *created and shared by a community of people.* Culture makes human societies possible.

1.2 Levels of culture:

Culture has many levels from surface to deep. Roughly they are:

- patterns of behavior, signs and products
- myths and rituals
- belief systems [including cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions]
- worldview
 - by worldview we mean: “the fundamental, largely implicit, cognitive, affect and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people make about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives.” They are the people’s images or maps of the reality of all things. They are what the people think with, not what they think about.
 - in examining worldviews, we will use the model that says worldviews are made up of interrelated sets of themes and counter-themes. In these sessions we will look at some of the major themes and counter-themes in Modernity and Postmodernity, and make suggestions for a Post-post-modern way to do the mission God has called us to do, namely to make known to the world the Good News of the Gospel.



II. THE NATURE OF MODERNITY

1. NATURAL-supernatural dualism:

1.1 *This worldly* – other worldly

- androcentrism - theocentrism
- time – eternity
- science–religion
- secularism–religious worldview
- public sphere-private sphere

1.2 *Androcentric* – theocentric

- secularism

1.3 *Materialism* – other-worldly realities

- Capitalism and Marxism (market–state)
- welfare state and civil religion
- commodification: reduce everything to a commodity and assess its value in market terms

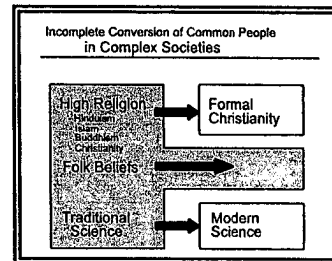
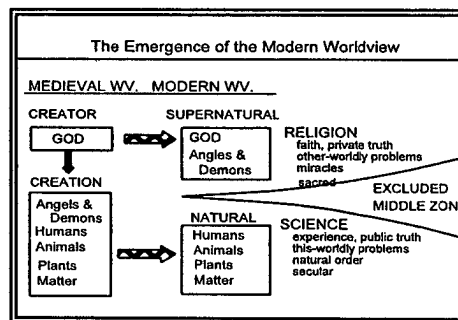
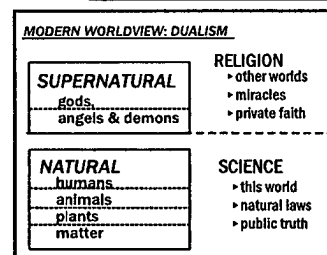
1.4 *Science* – religion

1.5 *Public Life and Truth* – private life and truth

Impact on the church and missions:

- social gospel vs evangelism
- Christian and civilize: Christianity has to do with otherworldly issues, science with this worldly ones.
- denial of spiritual realities in everyday life: ‘excluded middle

GROUP THESE INTO LARGER CATEGORIES	
LION	ROCK
WOMAN	DEMON
GRASS	DOG
ANGEL	MAN
COW	WHALE
TREE	GOD
FISH	SAND
ANCESTOR	VIRUS
MARTIAN	BUSH



2. MECHANISTIC ROOT METAPHOR--organic root metaphor

- 2.1 *This world is like a machine (impersonal)* – the world is alive and full of beings
- we control nature by factories
 - we control humans by bureaucracies
- 2.2 *Componentiality* – interdependence of all things
- break things down into fundamental interchangeable parts that can be manipulated
- 2.2 *The world is ruled by impersonal laws* – the world is run by negotiating relationships
- natural laws, and social laws in science, moral laws in religion that predict outcomes
 - clocks, schedules, road grids, and rules in everyday life
- 2.3 *The highest value is order* – value true relationships which are inherently chaotic
- well formed categories, borders, cleanliness
 - contracts rather than covenants, gifts
- 2.4 *An engineering mentality* – negotiational
- focus on planning and control – vs living out of control
 - separate means from ends, and focus on the means–‘techniques’. A formulaic approach
 - focus on problem solving and a ‘tinkering mentality’

Impact on the church and missions:

- stress forensic view of justification: cf. Norman Kraus
- an engineering approach to church growth, spiritual warfare, and life in general

3. RATIONAL POSITIVISM--traditional knowledge

- 3.1 *Reason* – revelation and faith
- start with doubt and critical reflection, not faith and trust in tradition and authority
- 3.2 *Positivist photographic view of reality* – objective/subjective knowledge
- cognitive objectivity gained by divorcing knowledge from feelings and values
 - objectivity gained by detached, invisible observer – vs – knower as part of the scene and involved cognitively and morally
 - knowledge is amoral– focus on ‘is,’ not ‘ought.’
 - focus on technique–on efficiency, productivity, profit. “The best way to . . .is . . .”
 -
- 3.3 *Well formed intrinsic categories* – fuzzy and extrinsic sets
- break things down into fundamental units
 - classification and taxonomies
 - abstract analytical grids

3.4 *Trust in analytical, algorithmic reason*—use of analogical, fuzzy and concrete reasoning

- precise referential symbol systems: mathematics, precisely defined words, scientific languages
- put components together in mechanistic ways that can be explained in terms of laws
- quantification

3.5 *Abstract theories* – analogical, concrete-functional, ‘fuzzy’ theories

- digital categories
- abstract algorithmic logic
- quantification vs stress on qualities

3.6 *Grand Unified Theories* - wisdom and incomplete but approximate knowledge

- search for abstract, generalized theories and systems

3.7 *Schooling* – informal and nonformal education, apprenticeships

- distrust of religion and home, faith in scientific experts

Impact on the church and missions

- focus on the Gospel as truth, not on holiness and godly character
- in message the focus is on communicating that truth and having people ‘believe’ it. Belief is reduced to mental assent to propositional truths, not to transformed lives.
- stress abstract theoretical constructs to define truth. Little ability to apply that to everyday life.
- see reason and the individual rather than authority and faith as the foundation for knowledge. What is important is what ‘we think about God,’ rather than ‘what does God think about us.’
- Christianity becomes highly personal and inner, rather than cosmic and corporate

4. UNIVERSALIZING – particularizing

4.1 ‘Civilization’

4.2 Colonial expansion – globalizing, totalitarian

5. INDIVIDUALISM – external controls

5.1 *Human rights* – responsibilities

- contract approach to relationships

6 . NATION STATE–traditional communities

7. MYTH OF PROGRESS THROUGH REDEMPTIVE VIOLENCE–stress on shalom

7.1 *Utopian*

- focus on the future, seeking a better world and life

7.2 *Competition and violence as necessary to progress*

- biological Darwinism - theory of human biological evolution
- cultural Darwinism - theory of human cultural evolution from barbarian to civilized
- political Darwinism – theory of democracy as the best way to rule societies
- economic Darwinism – theory of capitalism as the best way to order economic

7.3 *Progress can be achieved through human engineering and effort*

Impact on the church and missions

III. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MODERN WORLD

The church is in danger of becoming captive to Modernity. Os Guinness writes, “Have a long spoon when you dine with the devil.” Martin Marty writes that evangelicals are the most captive to modernity of all Christians.

1. How has modernity shaped the way we as Christians do church and missions?

2. How should we as Christians relate to modernity?

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Session 2
THE GOSPEL IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-MODERNITY
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Introduction; What is postmodernity?

- a romantic Rousseauian reaction to modernity
- modernity that has matured to middle age
- a cultural response to pluralism

I. THE NATURE OF POST-MODERNITY

1. DECONSTRUCTION - grand unified theory

- disillusionment with the 'Enlightenment agenda'
- anti-colonial

2. PARTICULARISM – universalism

- celebrate diversity and pluralism--cultures are seen as autonomous, good and *sui generis*
- reject uniformity and unity enforced from above.
- civilization replaced by 'culture'; 'barbarian' with 'native'.
- mystical holism--latent monism

3. INSTRUMENTALISM – positivism

- utilitarianism, pragmatism – not 'is it true' but 'does it work'
- relativism [vs. absolutes]
- perspectivalism [vs. an Archimedean vantage point]

4. EGO - group

- *self* (replaces the old word 'soul'--Bloom): self-realization, self-fulfillment
- freedom and rights over responsibilities
- existentialism: focus on news not history. Pursuit of happiness.
- consumerism and comfort, wealth
- health
- entertainment
- narcissism

5. THERAPEUTIC SOCIETY

6. MYTH OF REDEMPTIVE VIOLENCE

7. MYTH OF ROMANTIC LOVE

- love is *eros*, and this is the foundation for marriage (vs. love is *agape* and marriage is a covenant before God and society)

- the real story is about the chase—there is no story worth telling after the marriage (“. . . and they were married and lived happily ever after.”)
- love can be ‘lost’, and this justifies divorce (vs. keeping covenants is more important than personal gratification)

II. EVALUATION OF POST-MODERNITY

1. STRENGTHS:

- challenges the arrogance of human reason, and privileged position of science.
- helps us see other peoples and cultures as fully human and equals

2. WEAKNESSES:

- offers no answers to the crying needs of the world
It is like getting swept away by the river as we try to cross it (Berger)
- has no spiritual message of salvation, no sense of mission to a needy world, no message of hope for the oppressed and lost

III. COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A POST-MODERN WORLD

1. BEAR BOLD WITNESS :

- bear bold witness to what we believe. We are not God’s lawyers. We are his witnesses. But that means our witness must be authentic and living.
- speak the truth to empower others to make decisions. To deny them truth is more ‘colonial’ than to share information essential to their lives
- speak in love
- learn to see the world as other see it, and learn from their insights

2. NARRATIVE WITNESS:

We need to recapture our Christian vision and bear bold witness in the world as did our forebearers. We do have a relevant message pointing a way ahead in a postmodern world.

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Session 3
THE GOSPEL IN A GLOCAL WORLD
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I. POST-POSTMODERNITY: GLOCALISM

Some see post-modernity as a challenge to the arrogance of modernity, and the emergence of a new era beyond post-modernity. Houston Smith calls it the post post-modern era. Other speak of globalism and localism, and of glocalism. If this is right, then the door is open for Christians to boldly offer a new paradigm based on a biblical worldview as one option for the world to consider.

While there is little consensus on what glocalism will look like, some themes seem to be emerging:

1. GLOCALISM – globalism/particularism

- perspectivalism: all realities perceived by humans are from their particular perspectives. We must start with localisms and build up towards globalism through networks, shared understandings and cooperation
- seek unity underlying diversity--reject top down globalism and narcissistic particularism

2. WHOLISM–fragmentation

- a reconnection between spiritual and material realities
- a concern for the person as a whole—not reductionist or segmented

3. ORGANIC RELATIONALISM–mechanistic determinism

- a return to communities, relationships, humans and nature as central in life. Science and a mechanistic worldview are subordinate to humans and relationships

4. CRITICAL REALIST EPISTEMOLOGY–instrumentalism

4.1 Realism: there is a real world outside

4.2 Knowledge is a map, model or blueprint of reality. It is a montage in which the big picture emerges out of many little pictures

- knowledge is configurational
- knowledge is approximate, not relative. It sees somethings clearly, but not everything in full detail
- knowledge is open ended–there is always more to be learned
- knowledge is complimentary. Different maps or blueprints may be complimentary if they do not controdict one another at the deepest levels. An overall pattern emerges, but not a GUT.
- knowledge connects objective reality with mental maps via symbols. It uses Peircian semiotics: Signs have three parts to them: 1)the reality to which the sign points, 2) the sign used to communicate information, and 3) the images that the sign evokes in the mind

- in CR communication is measured by the correspondence between what the statement and reality, and between what the speaker says and the hearer understands.
- cognitive knowledge is tied to affectivity (feelings) and values (morality)
- disagreements require testing both maps or blueprints against reality and reevaluating the cultures and worldviews in which they are embedded.

5. NARRATIVES—structuralism

- stress particular stories embedded in larger stories or narratives. For the Christian all stories are embedded in one big story outlined in Scriptures.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH AND MISSION

1. THE CHURCH IN A GLOCAL WORLD

2. MISSION IN A GLOCAL WORLD

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