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A MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER WITH WESTERN CULTURE

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A British newspaper once quipped, "The word postmodern has no meaning. Use it as often as possible." No doubt the words "postmodern," "postmodernity," and "postmodernism" have become well worn, and there is still much murkiness as to what is meant. This should not, however, conceal the fact that in our culture we are in the midst of a seismic change, and that all the emerging "post-" words are attempts to take account of this shift. This brief article is not concerned to probe the meaning of postmodernity.[1] Its purpose is deeper than that: it articulates the normal posture the church must always take in its cultural milieu—a missionary encounter. In fact, our changing cultural situation offers us a new missionary setting with new dangers and new opportunities. If for the sake of the gospel we are to take hold of those opportunities and avoid the dangers, we will need to engage our culture in a missionary encounter. Our postmodern setting offers a fresh opportunity to return to the basics: What is involved in a missionary encounter?

A missionary encounter is about a clash of ultimate and comprehensive stories—the biblical story and the cultural story. It requires a church that believes the gospel and is committed to shaping its entire life by the biblical story. When this happens, the foundational religious beliefs shared by the cultural community are challenged. As the church lives fully in the biblical story, it encounters the reigning idolatrous assumptions that shape its culture. The church offers the gospel as a credible, alternative way of life to its contemporaries. There is a call for a radical conversion, an invitation to turn from the idolatrous beliefs of its cultural story, and to understand and live in the world in the light of the gospel.

Yet the church in the West is not well positioned to assume this posture of a missionary encounter in the postmodern West. This article is an attempt to spell out what might be needed for the church to recover its faithful missionary posture. Three areas will be explored: understanding the gospel, understanding our culture, and understanding the place of the church in culture.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL

If there is to be a missionary encounter, the church must believe and embody the gospel. The problem is that too often, instead of challenging the idolatry of culture, the gospel is accommodated and tailored to those religious beliefs. Taking hold of the good news of Jesus Christ afresh must be the first item on our agenda. This will involve four related threads.

First, we must take hold of the gospel *as truth*. The gospel is true and therefore universally valid for all peoples and all of human life. There are two battlefronts that must be engaged to take hold of the gospel as truth. On the one hand, the rampant, radical relativism of our pluralistic culture threatens any claim to truth. Too often those in the liberal wing of the church have allowed the gospel to be accommodated to this relativism. The gospel is considered to be the tribal story of Israel, or the story of one particular religious

tradition, that possesses no validity beyond those who inhabit that particular story. On the other hand, believers in the more conservative wing of the church have allowed the gospel to be accommodated to the continuing, powerful influence of pagan Greek thought. The gospel is reduced to unchanging ideas that are contained in the Bible. In contrast to both of these traditions, the truth of the Bible is found in a person and in events in which God has acted. It is especially in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we understand the truth about the world. What God has accomplished in these events has universal significance and validity. A true interpretation of the significance and meaning of Jesus Christ and his life, death, and resurrection is to be found in the witness, proclamation, and teaching of Scripture, but these are not first of all ideas that transcend history and culture, but inspired interpretations of what God has accomplished for the sake of the world.

This can be clarified in the second point: we must take hold of the gospel *as story*. Western culture has been shaped by at least two different traditions—the biblical tradition and the pagan Greek tradition. What distinguishes these two traditions is where truth can be found. In the pagan Greek tradition, truth is found in unchanging ideas that transcend history. In the biblical tradition, truth is found in the mighty acts of God that constitute an unfolding narrative that is moving toward a goal. This story is found in the Bible and claims to be *universal* history. It offers an answer to the origin and destiny of the whole world, and offers a clue to the meaning of world history and human life within it. The Bible sets forth a story of the whole world from its beginning to its end. It is the true story of the world, and all other stories are at best partial narratives, which must be understood within the context of the biblical story. Lesslie Newbigin, who has been a leading figure in calling for a missionary encounter with western culture, has emphasized the importance of understanding the Bible as universal history. He records the striking challenge that came to him from a significant Hindu scholar, Chaturvedi Badrinath, who said:

> I can't understand why you missionaries present the Bible to us in India as a book of religion. It is not a book of religion—and anyway we have plenty of books of religion in India. We don't need any more! I find in your Bible a unique interpretation of universal history, the history of the whole of creation and the history of the human race. And therefore a unique interpretation of the human person as a responsible actor in history. That is unique. There is nothing else in the whole religious literature of the world to put alongside it.[2]

To be faithful to its missionary calling, the church must understand the Bible as one true story. As Newbigin puts it: "I do not believe that we can speak effectively of the Gospel as a word addressed to our culture unless we recover a sense of the Scriptures as a canonical whole, as the story which provides the true context for our understanding of the meaning of our lives—both personal and public."[3] If the story of the Bible is fragmented into bits (historical-critical, devotional, systematic-theological, moral), it can easily be absorbed into the reigning story of culture. Newbigin's recognition of this, and thus his passion for the importance of seeing the Bible as one story, comes from his missionary experience. In India he saw how easy it was for the Bible to be absorbed into a more comprehensive and alien worldview. The Bible as one comprehensive story in contrast to the comprehensive worldview of Hinduism was a matter of life and death.

This leads to the third element: we must take hold of the gospel *in its comprehensive scope*. If the Bible is indeed universal history, it makes an absolute and totalitarian claim on all of our lives, and on all of the lives of all people. It claims to understand the world as it really is and to interpret the true meaning of history. Thus the way we understand all of human life depends on what we believe to be the true story of the world. The gospel is not a message that can be slotted into some small private religious realm of life. It demands that we conform the whole of our lives to its message.

A missionary encounter occurs when the church believes the Bible to be the true story of the world and embodies or

"indwells"[4] the comprehensive claims of that story as a countercultural community over against the dominant cultural story. Since both the biblical and the cultural stories make comprehensive and absolute claims, only one story can be *the* basic and foundational story for life. Newbigin charges that the Western church is "an advanced case of syncretism," because it has allowed the biblical story to be accommodated into the more comprehensive Enlightenment story.[5]

Finally, we must take hold of the gospel *as power*. If we take as our starting point the gospel that Jesus himself proclaimed, we see that it is the good news that God's kingdom is coming. This is the startling announcement that God's power in the Messiah and by the Spirit to restore all of creation and all of human life is breaking into history. In this announcement, we see once again the comprehensive scope of the gospel: God is restoring all creation and all of human life to again live under his rule. But it is also the announcement that God is acting in love and power to bring this about. This is not simply new religious doctrine to be affirmed and understood. It is an announcement about what God is doing: God is acting in power in Jesus, by the Spirit. When Jesus is challenged by Pharisees regarding his remarkable claims, he points to the power of God in the Spirit at work in him to drive out demons as proof that the kingdom has come (Matthew 12:28). Paul certainly believed that the gospel was not only true, but it was also the power of God to transform lives (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24; 2:4). A missionary encounter will require that the church be equipped, not simply with a true message but also one that has the power to encounter the commanding and powerful idolatrous story that shapes our culture.

UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CULTURE

A missionary encounter means that the story of our culture must be challenged by the gospel instead of allowing the gospel to be absorbed into it. This means that we will need to understand our culture. The subject of gospel and culture is

not a new one. One thinks of the foundational work of H. Richard Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. The majority of work on this topic has, however, been done by scholars who have not had the missionary experience of communicating the gospel to a radically foreign culture. A spate of work on gospel and culture has emerged from the missiological tradition under the rubric of contextualization studies. I suggest that a missionary approach—what I call a missiological analysis of culture—may be the most fruitful way to understand our culture to prepare us for a missionary encounter. Following men like J. H. Bavinck, Harvie Conn, Hendrik Kraemer, and Lesslie Newbigin[6] I note three elements of a missiological analysis of culture.

First, culture is a unified and cohesive whole. J. H. Bavinck writes: "We regard them [pagan religions and cultures] as powerful, life-controlling entities, as complete indivisible structures, because each element coheres with all others and receives its meaning from the total structures."[7] Culture is a unified network of institutions, systems, symbols, and customs that order human life in community.

Second, the fundamental beliefs that underlie and form Western culture are religious. Beneath the network of unified customs and practices that make up Western culture lie foundational religious commitments and assumptions. These religious beliefs function like tectonic plates that give shape to observable patterns of life in the cultural community. J. H. Bavinck puts it simply: "Culture is religion made visible; it is religion actualized in the innumerable relations of daily life."[8] Harvie Conn builds on Bavinck's insights: he stresses "the core place of religion in the structuring of culture's meaning and usage." Religion is "not an area of life, one among many, but primarily a *direction* of life. . . . Religion, then, becomes the heart of culture's integrity, its central dynamic as an organism, the totalistic radical response of man-in-covenant to the revelation of God."[9]

This view of culture is built on a Christian anthropology. Human beings are ultimately religious creatures. They are made to respond to and serve God in the totality of their lives.

If they do not, they do not become *un*religious creatures. Rather, they place their faith in something else, an idol. It is this idolatrous direction of their heart that shapes every part of their being—rational, lingual, social, economic, and so on. Culture is the shape given to their corporate existence. Culture is "humanity in its public, social, and historical aspect."[10] Since human beings are political, they form political orders in their communal life; since they are economic creatures, they form economic systems to govern their production, buying, and selling; since they are lingual creatures, they form a language in common to communicate; and so forth. Humanity also shares their religious lives in community; they share fundamental religious convictions that lie at the heart of their communal lives together. Thus the whole of their cultural formation is shaped by central religious commitments that underlie, integrate, shape, and direct the whole. And since these religious beliefs are idolatrous, our whole cultural reality is to some degree shaped by idolatry.

Unfortunately, the church in the West has not always grasped this. The problem is that two myths have undermined this understanding: the myth of a Christian culture and the myth of secular or pluralistic neutrality. The former myth asserts that Western culture is a Christian culture—or at least used to be. The latter myth is expressed clearly by Oxford economist Denys Munby in a book entitled *The Idea of a Secular Society and Its Significance for Christians* (1963). Munby identifies three of the essential marks of the secular society of the West: (1) it is uncommitted to any view of the universe and man's place in it, (2) it is pluralist in principle, and (3) it is tolerant to all competing truth claims. His ideal secular society is neutral with respect to differing beliefs, competing truth claims, and diverse religious commitments. A secular society is a neutral zone devoid of ultimate commitments or foundational assumptions in which all these truth claims have equal and fair opportunity to express themselves in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. The belief in a "secular society" characterized by these marks has only increased its grip on Western society in the three decades since Munby. Belief in

a secular or neutral pluralistic society is, however, an illusion. The claim to religious neutrality is a myth—and a dangerous one at that, because it masks its own ultimate commitments. Western culture is not a secular society but one that is instead shaped and formed by a deep religious faith in progress, human autonomy, the messianic power of scientific reason and technology, and social planning in its modern form. Today we might argue that new idols are vying for recognition in the public square, idols like tolerance, diversity, and consumerism among others. Faith in these idols lies at the root of our shared social life and shape every part of it. To the degree that the Christian church has embraced either of these myths—the myth of a Christian or secular society—it is not equipped for a missionary encounter with the idolatrous beliefs of our culture.

These religious beliefs are not only religious and idolatrous—and this is the third element of a missiological analysis of culture—but also comprehensive. Conn's quote above makes this clear: religion is not one area of life among many but a direction of life. That is, these beliefs are a religious power that direct and form all of cultural life. Our political and economic systems, our media and legal system, our traditions of thinking and emotional response are all shaped and directed by the religious beliefs of western culture.

And this moves us to our fourth point: these religious beliefs are socially embodied. That is, religious belief is given cultural expression in institutions, customs, practices, systems, symbols, and so on. Hunter makes this clear. The modern worldview that shapes Western culture is not simply beliefs or ideas; rather, the "key ideas, values and characteristics of modernity mentioned above are 'carried' by specific institutions. . . ."[11] He notes three major spheres of human activity: the economic, the political, and the cultural. In the economic realm, it is industrial capitalism that is the carrier of modernity's religious beliefs; in the political, it is the modern state; in the cultural, it is especially the "knowledge sector," that is, the modern university, the media of mass communication, the arts, and popular culture. One may quibble with Hunter about

specific issues, but the main point is clear and important: our religious beliefs do not remain as simply abstract beliefs or ideas. They take on social, cultural, and communal form. The idolatrous beliefs of Western culture are concretely embodied in the institutions and systems and customs that shape our culture. Since we must buy and sell within industrial capitalism, function as citizens within the nation state, and be educated, informed, and entertained by the "knowledge sector," there will be a conflict between the way a Christian would shape these areas and they way they are shaped by our humanist worldview.

If we were to stop at this point, our view of culture would be rather pessimistic. Comprehensive, idolatrous beliefs that shape all of culture seem to leave little room for missional engagement. If all of culture is formed by idolatry, the only position we can take is a Christ-against-culture position. But there are two further observations that must be made for a proper understanding of Western culture. First, God's creational revelation, or common grace, continues to uphold his creation, including cultural development, and does not permit human idolatry to run its gamut.[12] Bavinck comments: "We must remember that although man has fallen from God, and that the results of this fall are in evidence in his every thought and deed, nevertheless, thanks to God's common grace, man is safeguarded against complete deterioration."[13] In all cultural products, customs, and practices, there remains something of creational goodness. The state to some degree still pursues public justice; the economic system still allows some degree of stewardship in the use of resources; language to some degree still can communicate truth about the world; and so on. Al Wolters makes a helpful distinction here between structure and direction.[14] By structure, he refers to the creational structure of something—economic system, emotional response, language, for example. By direction, he refers to the (idolatrous or redemptive) religious direction that shapes that structure. While idolatry directs cultural practice, there remains something of the good creational structure in all cultural formation.

When speaking of Western culture, there is a second

observation that must be made. Western culture has to some degree been salted and shaped by the gospel for a long time. There is a growing tendency to critique the Christendom arrangement of the past, and indeed this critique is important, as the Christendom partnership has had a negative effect on the church in the West.[15] However, part of the legacy of Christendom is what O'Donovan calls the "obedience of the rulers,"[16] the fruit of which remains in the West to the present day. Throughout the thousand-year period of Christendom, the gospel permeated and salted many aspects of the social, intellectual, political, moral, and economic life of European culture, and the West continues to live on the capital of that period. Newbigin interprets Christendom as "the first great attempt to translate the universal claim of Christ into political terms."[17] The result of this attempt was that "the Gospel was wrought into the very stuff of [Western Europe's] social and personal life."[18] Today, "we still live largely on the spiritual capital which it generated."[19] Indeed, part of the church's missionary calling will be to point to the good things of Western culture as products of the gospel rather than of humanism.[20] But this should not lead us to think of the West—then or now—as a Christian culture. Powerful idolatrous elements are and always have been at work.

Common grace and the salting effect of the gospel notwithstanding, our culture is shaped at its core by idolatrous religious beliefs. These beliefs shape every part of our cultural practice. This leads to an unbearable tension between two equally comprehensive religious stories: how can the believer participate in an economic system, a political system, speak a language, think in a tradition, and so on, that is shaped by idolatry? Hendrik Kraemer rightly says that the stronger the sense of tension between the gospel and the idolatrous culture-story, the more faithful the church will be:

> The deeper the consciousness of the tension and the urge to take this yoke upon itself are felt, the healthier the Church is. The more oblivious of this tension the Church is, the more well established and at home in this world it feels, the more it is in deadly danger of being the salt that has lost its savour.[21]

Often the church does not feel the tension of which Kraemer speaks. Newbigin comments that the Western church has "in general failed to realize how radical is the contradiction between the Christian vision and the assumptions that we breathe in from every part of our shared existence."[22] Yet, surely Kraemer is correct: the more deeply this tension is felt, the more faithful and healthy the church will be, and better prepared for its missionary encounter.

UNDERSTANDING OF OUR MISSIONARY CALLING IN CULTURE

As the church more deeply feels the unbearable tension between two equally comprehensive religious stories, the question arises as to how the church resolves this unbearable tension. In the first place, the church must assume a posture of solidarity with its culture. The church may not (and, in any case, could not) withdraw from participation in cultural development. There are two biblical themes that underlie this assertion. The first is the creation mandate: God has created humankind to live in social and communal solidarity and develop the creation socially and culturally. In fact, since this is the way God has created humankind, it is not even possible, were the church so inclined, to withdraw and create an ecclesial ghetto. The second is the lordship of Christ: in Jesus Christ God claims all of his creation again. As two famous quotes put it: "There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan" (C. S. Lewis); or "There is no thumb-width of the entire domain of our human life of which the Christ, the Sovereign over everything, does not proclaim: 'It is Mine!'" (Abraham Kuyper). Our world belongs to God; therefore the church may not deliver its culture over to the powers of sin and evil. So the first words that must be spoken are *solidarity* and *participation* in the cultural process. The church must be "at home" in its cultural environment, participating in cultural development.

To only speak these words would be to accommodate to the world (i.e., idolatrous cultural patterns) on the road to apostasy. The church would assume a chameleon existence within its culture. Therefore, with equal force one must speak also words of *separation* and *rejection*. Since idolatrous religious beliefs shape every aspect of Western culture, the church may not simply say "yes" and affirm cultural development. Rather, it must also say "no" and reject the idolatrous development that has taken place in the West. The church must also be "at odds" with its cultural milieu.

Yet there is not symmetry between the "yes" and the "no," between affirmation and rejection, between solidarity and separation, between participation and dissent. Rather, we begin with affirmation: it is precisely because God loves the world that he acts against the idolatry and sin that distorts it. Therefore, God's people begin with solidarity and identification with their culture; we must love the culture that we inhabit. But precisely because of this solidarity we take a stance against the idolatry that disfigures it and inhibits the abundant life God has given. The "no" is a necessary corollary of the prior "yes."

How does one say "yes" and "no," both affirm and reject, live in solidarity and separation? There are various ways this has been attempted in church history. H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* gives an introduction to ways the church has struggled with this tension. Instead of surveying those models, brief reference to a New Testament model will offer insight into the way I believe we should approach and interact with the forms of our culture. The early church was born into the cultural milieu of the Roman Empire. The primary social institution that held the Roman empire together was the *oikos*, a word normally translated as "household." But it was a very different institution than what we call a household. Whereas we normally refer to the nuclear family, in the Roman empire the *oikos* was the extended family, but moved well beyond the family. It also incorporated economic relationships and political authority in an undifferentiated way. Like all institutions of the Roman empire, the *oikos* was

deeply shaped by the idolatry of that culture. Authority was lodged in the father, or *paterfamilias*, and he held absolute power. He was the *kurios*, or lord, of the home. The entire *oikos* was shaped by this abusive and hierarchical view of authority and by the sinful oppression that accompanied this power. The father maintained the right of life and death over all in his household. Clearly this social institution was a twisted and corrupted entity.

What would the early church do with this fundamental institution that they faced—this foundational building block of Roman society? Would they simply *reject* it and invent new forms of marriage, family, and economic practice? No, their desire was to be *at home* in the culture and embody good news in the normal relationships of life. Any attempt at withdrawal or ghettoization would cripple the good news; the good news would not come in familiar forms. The early church would then be irrelevant. Would they simply *affirm* and *adopt* it? Would they accommodate themselves to this social institution? No, that would be to compromise the gospel to idolatry. The early church recognized that they were not only to be at home in the culture but also at odds with the controlling faith-assumptions that undergird and shape that culture. The early church was very aware of the idolatry that shaped the Roman Empire—an idolatry of power that was invested, among other things, in the *paterfamilias*. There was tension between the life the gospel called for and the controlling idolatrous faith assumptions of the Roman culture. And it is precisely this tension that was the source of faithfulness.

They neither affirmed nor rejected the *oikos;* they instead subverted it. They discerned the creational relationships within the household—husband-wife, parent-child, boss-worker, and so forth—and transformed them, uprooting them from the soil of Roman idolatry and transplanting them into the soil of the gospel. The creational structure was recognized and affirmed, while the idolatrous twisting of those relationships was rejected. Reread Ephesians 5 in this light. Paul's exhortation to husbands to love their wives sacrificially, to nurture their children lovingly, and treat their slaves with

respect was radical. Dignifying women and slaves with the responsibility of submitting themselves for the sake of the Lord was revolutionary. Those relationships were transformed. Insofar as the early church was obedient, a very different kind of *oikos* appeared. It was an institution recognizable to their Roman contemporaries, but fundamentally transformed. The *paterfamilias* now used his authority to serve sacrificially rather than lord it over others. Wives, children, and slaves were raised to a new level of dignity.[23]

This model is one that can be employed in interaction with all the forms, customs, institutions, and practices of our culture. As the church in West thinks about its relationship to schools, business, government, the English language, media, the economic system, and a whole host of other cultural forms we interact with every day, I suggest this model is helpful in approaching both the creationally good structure that is found as well as the idolatrously twisted distortions.

A warning is appropriate at this juncture. As the church has followed this path and adopted Niebuhr's "Christ transforms culture" model, it has sometimes fallen prey to triumphalism. Transformation becomes the ultimate goal rather than faithfulness to the gospel. Perhaps the New Testament theme of suffering can help us here. When we think of a missionary encounter, of the clash of the gospel with the idolatrous story of culture, we often think in terms of power. In other words, we have—or seek—the economic, political, or social power necessary to win that clash. There is nothing wrong with this, provided that power is used in keeping with the gospel. This was not, however, the situation of the early church; it is not the situation of many growing churches in the Majority World; and it is increasingly not the situation of the church in the West. To the degree that the Lord has blessed the church with power, it must use it humbly in the service of the gospel. Yet if the church finds itself at the margins in a position of weakness, unable to shape its culture, this does not lift the responsibility of a comprehensive witness. Rather, the witness will take the form of suffering at the hands of the powers in the clash of comprehensive stories.

The reason that suffering may often be the result of faithful witness is that every cultural story seeks to become not only the dominant and controlling story but also the exclusive story. Newbigin has stated this well:

> No human societies cohere except on the basis of some kind of common beliefs and customs. No society can permit these beliefs and practices to be threatened beyond a certain point without reacting in self-defense. The idea that we ought to be able to expect some kind of neutral secular political order, which presupposes no religious or ideological beliefs, and which holds the ring impartially for a plurality of religions to compete with one another, has no adequate foundation. The New Testament makes it plain that Christ's followers must expect suffering as the normal badge of their discipleship, and also as one of the characteristic forms of their witness.[24]

There may—or may not—be transformation. In any case, the call of the church is to faithfully bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel in all of life.

CONCLUSION

If Lesslie Newbigin is correct, and I believe he is, the church in the West is a deeply compromised church. It has accommodated itself deeply to its culture. Civil religion is rampant in North America. The foundational shift taking place in our culture, often identified as postmodernity, offers us an opportunity to regain the posture of a missionary encounter. This will involve the difficult task of grappling again with the gospel, deepening our insight into our culture, and, finally, testing everything, holding on to the good, and rejecting the evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22).

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NOTES

1. I have offered an interpretation of postmodernity in "Charting a Faithful Path Amidst Postmodern Winds," in *In the LambLight: Christianity and Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel*, ed. Hans Boersma (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2001, 17–31). Other helpful interpretations of postmodernity are Philip Sampson's "The Rise of Postmodernity," in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum Lynx Books, 1994); Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 7–84.
2. Newbigin, *A Walk Through the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999), 4. See also Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 89.
3. Newbigin, "Response to 'Word of God?' John Coventry, SJ," *The Gospel and Our Culture Newsletter* 10 (1991): 2–3.
4. Employing Michael Polanyi's terminology, Newbigin speaks of "indwelling" the biblical story. For more, see *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 33–38.
5. Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 23.
6. The following analysis is deeply indebted to J. H. Bavinck, Harvie Conn, Lesslie Newbigin, and Hendrik Kramer and their understanding of cultural analysis. Note that all four of these men had extensive cross-cultural experiences as missionaries, Bavinck and Kraemer in Indonesia, Conn in South Korea, and Newbigin in India.
7. J. H. Bavinck, *Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960), 173.
8. Bavinck, *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 57.
9. Harvie Conn, "Conversion and Culture: A Theological Perspective with Reference to Korea", in eds. John Stott and Robert Coote, *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 149–50.
10. Newbigin, "Christ and the Cultures," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 31 (1978): 9.
11. James D. Hunter, "What is Modernity? Historical Roots and Contemporary Features," in eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1994), 18.
12. The term common grace is often misunderstood. I use it here in a way similar to G. C. Berkouwer who writes: "Life of this earth does not yet disclose the full consequences of sin. Calvin speaks of 'common grace' and, in this connection, he discusses virtues to be seen also in the lives of unbelievers. He did not wish to ascribe these phenomena to a left-over goodness in nature—as if apostasy from God were not so serious—but rather he discerned here the power of God in revelation and in grace preserving life from total destruction" (Berkouwer, "General and Special Divine Revelation", in ed. Carl F. H. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959], 20–21; cf. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: General Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], 137–230).
13. Bavinck, *The Impact of Christianity*, 57.
14. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).
15. See my article titled, "The Missional Church: Ecclesiological Discussion in the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America," *Missiology*, 30:4 (October 2002): 479–90.
16. Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 212–16.
17. Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 47.
18. Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 1.
19. Newbigin, *Priorities for a New Decade* (Birmingham, UK: National Student Christian Press and Resource Centre, 1980), 6.
20. Polanyi's image of flame and oxygen.
21. Hendrick Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 36.
22. Newbigin, "The Pastor's Opportunities 6: Evangelism in the City," *Expository Times* 98 (September, 1987): 4.
23. This model of contextualization J. H. Bavinck called "*possessio*"; Hendrik Kraemer, "subversive fulfillment"; and Lesslie Newbigin, "challenging relevance." It falls within the domain of H. Richard Niebuhr's fifth model, "Christ transforms culture," described in his book, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing), 1951.
24. Newbigin, *Trinitarian Faith and Today's Mission* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 42.