

MULTICULTURALISM AND PLURALIZATION: KISSING COUSINS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Relating globalization to multiculturalism and pluralization, it can be argued that, paradoxically, they seem to represent opposing phenomena, and yet also feed off of each other. That is to say, an observation of postmodern society leads us to conclude that globalization is both a cause of and a result of multiculturalism and pluralization. Just as many societies do not encourage close relatives to intermarry, even though there may be an attraction there, such as is conveyed by the colloquialism ‘kissing cousins’, there is a lot about all three of these societal realities that the Christian might be uncomfortable in encouraging. In this chapter, then, we will seek to delineate the close relationship of globalization vis-à-vis multiculturalism and pluralization, but critique their dynamic interfacing Christianly, and especially missiologically.

Before doing so, let me define the following terms as they will be used in this chapter. *Multiculturalism* can be understood as ‘a deliberate fashioning of society so as to make it culturally/ethnically heterogeneous’. Thus, for instance, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* of 1971 enshrined in legislation a policy of multiculturalism whereby Canada agreed to facilitate wide-scale immigration, and encourage each ethnic and religious minority group to retain its own distinctive customs and norms while fitting into Canadian society in a broad sense. Instead of a ‘melting pot’ society being envisaged, a ‘salad bowl’ population would be created. In a salad, each ingredient retains its own texture, color, and taste while blending into the whole.¹ At the heart of moving to a more heterogeneous society—now similarly promoted in countries like the USA and Australia—is the celebrating of the diversity that multiculturalism engenders, as reflected in the then Prime Minister Trudeau’s statement: “The more secure we feel in [our own] particular social context, the more free we are to explore our identity beyond it.”²

Pluralization, if we are going to distinguish it from multiculturalism, can be defined as Os Guinness does, as “the process by which the number of options in the private sphere of modern society rapidly multiplies at all levels, especially at the level of world view, faiths and ideologies [so that] . . . choice becomes a value in itself, even a priority . . . [as] change becomes the very essence of life.”³ In a narrower sense, *religious pluralism* relativizes all truth claims so that it “suggests that world religions are all culturally bound expressions of genuine contact with the divine.”⁴

¹ This analogy is developed with respect to racial pluralism by Grace Sangok Kim, “Asian North American Youth: A Ministry of Self-Identity.” in *People of the Way: Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture, and Community*, ed. David Ng (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), p. 252.

² Cited in Brian Seim, ed., *Canada’s New Harvest: Helping Churches Touch Newcomers* 2nd ed. (Toronto: SIM Canada, 1999), p. 65.

³ Cited in Donald Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), p. 18.

⁴ David Clark, “Is Special Revelation Necessary for Salvation?” in *Through No Fault of Their Own?* eds. William Crockett and James Sigountos (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), p. 37.

Multiculturalism Giving Rise to Globalization

While migration has always occurred—such as the Israelites moving en masse from Egypt to Palestine—the rate of crossing borders in the last century has been unprecedented in human history. Demetrios Papademetriou of the International Migration Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for World Peace in Washington D.C., indicates that 200 million people, or 3% of the world’s population, live in a country in which they were not born. This demographic shift has in turn altered mono-cultural societies into multicultural ones.

My wife and I lived in downtown Toronto in a condo for three years. One of Linda’s first concerns was to identify a hair dresser whom she felt comfortable with, within walking distance, and with whom the price was right! She started going to a hair salon run by a Filipino lady. As they got talking, Linda discovered that this vivacious woman was a genuine Christian. A few months later Linda ended up getting her hair done by a Chinese lady there. Never failing to miss a God-given witnessing opportunity, Linda mentioned that her husband was pastoring the English-speaking congregation of a Chinese church in the city. The Chinese lady exclaimed, “That’s great! I’m a Christian too. My boss led me to faith in Christ.”

In subsequent months, Linda returned to having her hair done by the manager of the salon, the Filipino woman. But one day a new hair dresser was at work, and since all the others were busy, Linda ended up with the new lady. Linda knew enough about features to discern that this beautiful woman was Somali. Knowing that they are, for the most part, Muslim, Linda asked, “Are you Somali?” Surprised, the woman blurted out, “Yes!” Linda was well on her way to a friendly conversation with her that led to an opportunity to share her faith. But the Somali lady declared, “Don’t worry. I believe in Jesus too. That lady introduced me to the Saviour”, pointing to her Chinese colleague.

Here are some samples of how migration patterns have reconfigured the demographic landscape of western world nations especially.

- According to the 1996 census, 17.7% of Canada’s population was made up of visible minorities, compared to about 6% three decades earlier. In other words, whereas prior to 1961, two-thirds of immigrants arrived from Western Europe, a trend that was slowly reversed, since 1991, one-third of all immigrants came from Hong Kong, China, India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines.⁵ Thus, Canada now has 860,000 Chinese (27% of the visible minority population), 671,000 South Asians (21%), and 574,000 African-Caribbean Canadians (18%), among 31 million people.⁶

⁵ Joe Couto, “Multicultural Diversity Growing in Canadian Churches,” *ChristianWeek* (May 1, 2001), p. 3.

⁶ T. V. Thomas, “Mobilizing a Church on the Move”. Paper presented to the International Leadership Conference hosted by Lausanne Canada March 9-12, 1998 in Toronto, p. 2.

- New York City has more than 350,000 Dominicans, which is more than the Dominican Republic's capitol city of Santo Domingo, with 225,000.⁷ Similar concentrations can be seen in other world class cities, like Vancouver, which has more Sikhs than any city outside of the Punjab. Paris has more North Africans than most of the cities of North Africa. London has vast Arab, Caribbean, and Bangladeshi communities. Amsterdam is full of Indonesians.
- Due to the increased presence of visible minorities, like Chicanos and African Americans, it is estimated that the USA will have a more than 50% non-white population by 2050.⁸
- Most of the major languages of the earth are now spoken in certain western world megalopolises. Los Angeles is home to over 100 spoken languages.⁹ Toronto has been designated by the United Nations as the world's most cosmopolitan city, with almost 200 languages spoken on its streets and in its homes.¹⁰
- With this diverse ethnic mix has come a plethora of religions. In Canada, a decade ago there were 253,000 Muslims, but in 2001, 650,000 (according to the Canadian Muslim Congress), 161,000 Sikhs in 1991 compared to 400,000 today (according to the World Sikh Organization), and 157,000 Hindus in 1991, compared to 300,000 now.¹¹ On a similar note, while there are an estimated 4-6 million Muslims in the USA today, the majority of whom are African-American, by 2015 Islam could become the second largest religion in the USA, bypassing Judaism.¹²

With the internationalizing of our western world cities, come globalizing tendencies. That is to say, that everyone's culture becomes everyone else's culture. There is a global village sense to living in major urban centers of Europe and North America, let alone in many two-thirds world cities. The reality of multiculturalism has meant, in turn, a gradual shift in attitudes and values toward relativizing everything. Each culture or religion, we are told, is to be respected as equally legitimate and valid. What comes to dominate is what has been called 'politically correct' thinking that has as its absolute the concept that there are no absolutes. This mindset is captured amusingly by Jewish talk show host Dennis Prager who on one of his shows made this telling comment about how religious tolerance is not modeled in the American public school system:

Liberals are always talking about pluralism, but that is not what we mean. . . . In public schools, Jews don't meet Christians. Christians don't meet Hindus. Everybody meets nobody. That is, as I explain to Jews all the time, why their children so easily inter-marry. Jews don't marry Christians. Non-Jewish Jews marry non-Christian Christians. Jews for nothing marry Christians for nothing.

⁷ Roger Greenway and Timothy Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 63.

⁸ Terry Muck, *Alien Gods on American Turf* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), p. 13.

⁹ David Ripley, "Reaching the World at our Doorstep," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 30(2) (April 1994): 142.

¹⁰ T. V. Thomas, p. 3.

¹¹ Ron Csillag, "Census Reveals How We Worship", *Toronto Star* (May 12, 2001), p. M16.

¹² Wendy Murray Zoba, "Islam, USA: Are Christians Prepared for Muslims in the Mainstream?" *Christianity Today* (April 3, 2000): 40.

They get along great because they affirm nothing. They have everything in common—nothing. That’s not pluralism.¹³

Pluralization

What is pluralism or pluralization then? Before we tackle any Christian understanding of it, we must understand that the ease of travel, and the accessibility of information about what is happening in every part of the world wrought by the Internet, satellite TV, and the micro-chip revolution have, in part, given rise to this migration from South to North. And, insofar as the physical dislocation has been in one direction, the same affect of multiculturalism through mass communication technologies that enables Berber tribes in the Sahara to watch “Baywatch” reruns, or Chinese villages to want CNN-style democratic principles to run their local governments, begins to take hold in traditional two-thirds world cultures.

You thus end up with pluralization one way or the other. In the North it is seen visually, through diversity of ethnicity and consumer choice, as one walks the streets. In the South it is cultivated through satellite TV and the Internet. Therefore, it is a pluralization that is influencing billions, and so, ironically, also becoming a kind of globalizing phenomenon. Pluralization is what increasingly the globe is familiar with, and which transnational corporations exploit to peddle their products universally, but in such a way as to take local tastes into account. Documenting this globalizing dynamic and how we got there, Thomas Friedman in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, summarizes the process well in this observation:

Today’s era of globalization is built around the falling telecommunication costs—thanks to microchips, satellites, fiber optics and the Internet. These new information technologies are able to weave the world together even tighter. These technologies mean that developing countries do not just have to trade their raw materials to the West and get finished products in return; they mean that developing countries can become big-time producers as well. . . . If the first era of globalization shrank the world from a size “large” to a size “medium”, this era of globalization is shrinking the world from a size “medium” to a size “small”.¹⁴

Technologies like the Internet that were utilized first of all economically to open up markets internationally in turn became channels of the democratization of information. Again we listen to Friedman attempting to fathom the meaning of this globalizing development:

Put all of this democratization of information together and what it means is that the days when governments could isolate their people from understanding what life was like beyond their borders or even beyond their villages are over. Life outside can’t be trashed or made to look worse than it is. And life inside can’t be propagandized and made to look

¹³ Cited in Donald Carson, *The Gagging of God*, p. 43.

¹⁴ (New York: First Anchor Books Edition, 2000), pp. xviii, xix.

better than it is. Thanks to the democratization of information, we all increasingly know each other's lives—no matter how isolated you think a country might be.¹⁵

The hallmark of pluralization, philosophically, then, is tolerance to points of view other than one's own. Dogmatism is out and inclusivism is in. It further means to celebrate diversity, or differences, in their own right, whether they are cultural or moral. Hence, we should not be surprised, for example, that postmodern artists juxtapose seemingly contradictory styles from different sources.¹⁶ It means integration of a diverse and eclectic society, or as Friedman puts it: "The globalization system . . . has one overarching feature—integration."¹⁷ When push comes to shove, economic-driven homogenizing pressures of globalization win out over a resolute commitment to keeping things the same (tradition) or retaining of local values as having ultimate significance.¹⁸ Economically, then, pluralization becomes subsumed to the goals of transnational corporations that seek a worldwide market for a narrow range of products.

The unforgivable sin, philosophically, however, becomes dogmatism about one belief system. As Donald Carson puts it, "Open-mindedness . . . no longer means that you may or may not have strong views yet remain committed to listening honestly to countervailing arguments. Rather, it means you are dogmatically committed to the view that all convictions that any view whatsoever is wrong are improper and narrow-minded. In other words, open-mindedness has come to be identified with not the means of rational discourse, but with certain conclusions."¹⁹ Therefore, it should not surprise us to find that even among evangelicals there is an apparent ambivalence to biblical absolutes, as evidenced by a Gallup poll that found 20% of American born-again Christians believe in reincarnation and 26% in astrology.²⁰ This clash between the traditional (read allowing for local differences, the tolerance of diversity) and the new (read the leveling of differences, the globalization of culture) find their symbols for Friedman in the tension in the Middle East over which is more important—the preservation of olive trees (symbolizing the local values) or the ability to drive a Lexus (that which the global Westernization of culture promotes). For the Christian, which is meant to win out: the fruits of globalization (the Lexus) or pluralization (the celebration and preservation of the local)?

Or is "glocalization", the striving for a healthy balance between universals (globalization) and particulars (pluralization) the way forward? In terms of understanding Ultimate Reality, of course, the Christian is not in favor of pluralism; only the Truth can make one free! We are not in favor of pluralism, except in the sense of not removing the right to choose between competing truth claims, or except in the case of things, as determined by Scripture, that are morally neutral. Pluralism calls for openness to diversity but mistakes that relativism (the belief that no truth is final truth) is necessary

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁶ Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), p. 20.

¹⁷ Friedman., p. 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁹ Carson, p. 35.

²⁰ Charles Colson, "Salad-Bar Christianity," *Christianity Today* (August 7, 2000): 80.

for there to be authentic openness. Someone has labeled *relativism* as *having one's feet firmly planted in mid-air!* However, logically, the existence of rival religious worldviews only implies that all of them cannot be valid.²¹ Christians hold to *religious exclusivism* because we comprehend that divine self disclosure has come to humankind in two specific ways, the Word incarnated (in the person of Jesus Christ), and the Word propositionally, in the Scriptures. These revelations from God point us away from *religious pluralism* while relatively freeing us to celebrate other forms of diversity.

What Goes Around Comes Around

Worth reflecting on and deciphering, as we seek to critique globalization and pluralization Scripturally, is how the church met the challenge of multiculturalism and religious pluralism in the first few centuries of its existence. Then the Roman Empire provided religious and social dynamics not dissimilar to our own in the Western world today.²² The same dynamic is found in other parts of the world too, such as the nation I have been most exposed to crossculturally, India. The church in India has developed a theology of mission for over two hundred years in a milieu that in North America we only now discovering—that of religious diversity, one dominated by Hinduism but crowded by Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. In the West, the cultural landscape is encroached upon by these same world religions and people groups, and by a secular humanism that is the byproduct of the Enlightenment and modernity, all of which have ‘conspired’ to marginalize the church and create an incipient hostility toward the church. The new post-Constantinian reality for the church, in my view, is not a bad thing; however, here, I am simply raising the issue to make a comparison.

Perhaps it is not by accident that Lesslie Newbigin, longtime missionary to India, upon his return to the West, prophetically analyzed the need to re-evangelize the West and develop a new apologetic for doing so in which the uniqueness of Christ would be defended.²³ He it is who gave us the tool of understanding that Christians could be *cultural pluralists* without being *religious pluralists*. Not coincidentally, another voice from South Asia, Ajith Fernando, has passionately called for tolerance in terms of our attitude of respect to those of other faiths while remaining unswerving in our defense of there being but One Way.²⁴ Similarly, fellow Sri Lankan, Vinod Ramachandra, out of his context of religious and cultural pluralism, has been able to show how the West can be recaptured from its bedazzlement by such idols as inclusivism and relativism.²⁵ The South Asian church's response to its longstanding existence in a context of multiculturalism (e.g. India has 18 major languages each with a population of at least 50

²¹ William Craig, “Politically Incorrect Salvation,” in *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, eds. Timothy Phillips and Dennis Okholm (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 77.

²² Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971).

²³ These musings are found in his books such as *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1989) and *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995).

²⁴ *The Christian's Attitude to World Religions* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1987).

²⁵ *The Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralistic Paradigm* (Delhi, India: ISPCK, 1996) and *Gods That Fail: Modern Idolatry and Christian Mission* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1996).

million people) and religious pluralism (we have not even mentioned the 350 million Muslims of the subcontinent) may enlighten the global church as she wrestles with a similar cultural and religious environment as a result of globalization—a trivializing and yet a tribalizing of culture and truth claims.²⁶

ARE WE GOING TO PLAY IN A JAZZ BAND OR A CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA AS WE WORSHIP GOD IN HEAVEN?

I suspect it might be a jazz band! You see, the conductor of an orchestra is in complete control. His or her baton and gestures control every nuance of how the music is played by the individual musicians. The interpretation of a classical masterpiece is recognized by all as the conductor's. However, in a jazz band, the conductor encourages improvisation. Diversity **and** unity are enhanced in the jazz interpretation of music. I do not think everything will be homogenized in heaven.

About the early church's response to the pluralization challenge, she sought to emerge and be resilient in the face of enormous pressures. In a sense, the Roman Empire created conditions of globalization, as common features of the nations in its far-flung empire were observable everywhere, whether it be the presence of Greek as the *lingua franca*, the economic and communication advantages produced by its extensive road system, or its tolerance of local religions as long as its polytheistic state religion was given lip service. In the Roman Empire, *religio* meant the state religion, a formal connection between humans and their gods. In this agreement, the gods, especially Jupiter, would look after Rome's security and welfare, while the state would look after the gods' needs by appropriate sacrifice and worship. While citizens of the Roman Empire did not have to really believe in the divinity of the gods or their human representative, the Emperor, they must participate in the public offerings and ceremonies. Belief was a private matter but everyone was expected to participate in the state cult. Failure to do so could result in imprisonment or death. Of course, this posed an ethical dilemma for Christians who could offer allegiance only to the true and living God. To appease conquered peoples, the Romans absorbed the local deities into their pantheon of gods. Mutual respect for each other's gods was a way around the clash of cultures. However, that did not work for the Christians, who could not agree with the Roman distinction between *religio* (public faith) and *superstitio* (private faith).

While seeking to be good citizens, they refused to participate in cultic emperor worship, often with fatal consequences. They had no problem with the Gospel taking root and finding expression in cultures other than Jewish (even documented as early as the NT through the disputes referred to in Acts 15 and the book of Galatians). They were respectful of pluralization but resisted any leveling affects (akin to the pressures of globalization) that required them to compromise faith. Faithfulness to the uniqueness of Christ and His salvation required consistent behavior in both the public and private spheres. The early Christians understood that they could be cultural pluralists (not insisting, in the sense of physically forcing, others to believe as they did, which would have been a form of pre-Islamic jihad) while being religious exclusivists (holding firmly to their convictions for themselves).

²⁶ The dual development of universals and particulars in the phenomenon we now call globalization was noticed early on by John Naisbitt in *Global Paradox* (New York: Avon Books, 1994).

TOWER OF BABEL: PROOF FOR THE CHRISTIAN THAT GLOBALIZATION IS WRONG?

Homogenised uniformity seems to have existed millennia ago, for Genesis 11:1 announces that “the whole world had one language and a common speech”. How do we know that the pluralization that diverse cultures creates is not a judgment, for in indignation, God subsequently confuses their languages and scatters them across the planet (vv. 5-7)?

- ◆ The reason for the nations’ indictment is not the homogenisation of humankind, but their misuse of the benefits of it so as to make themselves godlike in their grasping for a larger-than-life role in relation to their Creator as they built the Tower of Babel (vv. 3-4). Pride has from the beginning been at the root of all evil.
- ◆ Even more telling is realizing that the nations had been allowed to develop in advance of the Tower of Babel incident. Genesis 10 describes what God in His grace had encouraged—the evolution of diverse cultures (a table of 70 nations is outlined in this chapter). One is left with the distinct impression that the fulfilling of the mandate of Genesis 1:28 in part is to be fulfilled by the diversity of the 12,000 people groups now inhabiting the earth.

Returning to our own day, we pick up with Newbigin again in his development of a theology of culture. He sees cultural plurality emanating from the diversity found within the unity of the Triune Godhead, and so is able to distinguish between the “diversity [which] is part of God’s gracious purpose for the human family” and the “separation and mutual rejection [that] is not” so that diversity is not necessarily at odds with unity.²⁷

Some Applications

While limited in not being able to develop a full-blown Christian response to multiculturalism and pluralization vis-à-vis globalization in a single chapter, a number of missiological principles and applications are proffered briefly.

1. Multiculturalism is consistent with the peaceful acceptance of racial and cultural diversity and equality inherent in the human race “made in the image of God” and made realizable through Christ (Genesis 10; Ephesians 2:11-21; Acts 10:1-11:18; Galatians 3:28), and therefore to be embraced by Christians, who must be the true “cultural pluralists”.²⁸ Another way of putting this is that the Christian mindset is of inclusivism in the sense of recognizing that all cultures and individuals have both divine aspects (“made in the image of God”) and are loved by God, even though they also have fallen aspects to them, which come under judgment. Furthermore, that there is no Christian culture or race, per se, and so we love and appreciate

²⁷ George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin’s Theology of Cultural Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 253.

²⁸ A full elaboration of this love of God for human kinds, not just humankind, is found in chapter 3 of David Lundy, *We Are the World: Globalisation and the Changing Face of Missions* (Carlisle, UK: OM Publishing, 1999).

without discrimination all that God has made, while critiquing the sinful dimensions of everyone and everything. Moreover, that this critiquing is especially done in the Household of Faith, where the presence of the Holy Spirit empowers us to effect the change and repent of sins, whereas we cannot expect or require that transformation from the unconverted who are dead in their trespasses and sins. Charles Van Engen sums up this fine balance as follows: “This world-encountering Church is as broad as all humanity (pluralist), as accepting as Christ’s cosmic lordship (inclusivist), and as incorporating and gathering as Christ’s disciples (exclusivist).”²⁹

2. Pluralization as a philosophy that has arisen out of globalization and multiculturalism, in part, is to be resisted where it compromises the absolute truths of the Bible. Our behavior should therefore in society be expressed much the same way as it was by Christians in the ancient Roman Empire who did not bow to the pressure to separate their public and private lives. They remained religious exclusivists in the public place while showing respect to the peoples around them, also part of their morality, thus being cultural pluralists. Nonetheless, their cultural inclusivism was a subset of their religious exclusivism, not the other way around! Revelation takes precedence over relevance, even though the revelation of “God made flesh” signals to humankind that for divine revelation to be fully understood, it needs a human/cultural context in which to be expressed (I Corinthians 15:3-4; Jude 3).
3. The genuine respecting of opposite points of view about fundamental issues while holding to the uniqueness of Christ can be demonstrated through friendship building, gentle, thoughtful, engaged disagreement (2 Timothy 2:22), and living out the truth practically (James 1:22-25). That mindset and matching behavior has been described aptly as “the ability to temporarily set aside one’s own point of view and enter sympathetically, but critically, into those of other persons and groups.”³⁰ Related to this is the role that hospitality should have in the Christian’s lifestyle (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2). There is an Arab proverb that resonates here that suggests that ‘if you have room in your heart, you have room in your home’. Our homes should not be fortresses to protect us from the world. Rather they should be gateways (Grand Central Stations or Staten Islands) for diverse strangers to find a welcome that mirrors for them the inclusive and self-giving love of Christ (cf. Leviticus 19:33-34).
4. Pluralization in the sense of a public attitude of tolerance should be promoted by Christians for “evangelicals know that a pluralism that does not favour one faith over another actually provides an ideal context for mission and ministry.”³¹ Post-Constantinian models of church in society are truer to the biblical picture of a church, a faith community that is in the minority—which is the reality when

²⁹ “The Uniqueness of Christ.” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 3rd edition, eds. Ralph Winter and Stephen Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), p. 167.

³⁰ Richard Osmer, “The Teaching Ministry in a Multicultural World” in *The Local Church in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century*, eds. Max Stackhouse, Tim Dearborn, and Scott Paeth (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), p. 68.

³¹ Gary Walsh, “Pluralism and Faith Communities”, *Faith Today* (January/February 2001), p. 7.

pluralization rules.³² In this sense, Christians should be ‘pro-choice’, while still living counter-culturally, and therefore prophetically, in order to be faithful to God’s Word and morality, and a kind of ‘conscience’ to those of their barrio, high-rise, and souk. As Rodney Clapp eloquently phrases it: “Non-Constantinian evangelism means recognizing the differences of others, . . . of requir[ing] that Christians understand and practice evangelism as proposing rather than imposing Christ. . . . The God of Israel and Jesus Christ makes himself known by entering into vulnerable relationship with his creatures. This God—preeminently in the life of Christ—does not force people to faith but attempts to persuade them to faith.”³³

5. Pluralization, properly held, means that we are given over, as messengers of the Gospel, not only to persuade the masses or individuals to accept Christ (the Mark 16:15 version of the Great Commission emphasis), but to intentionalize the planting of churches in every people group (the Matthew 28:19, 20 emphasis of the Great Commission). God’s glory then is furthered by a pluralization mentality which sees His intention that a people for Himself is to be rooted in every tribe, tongue and culture (Rev. 5:9-10; cf. Genesis 12:3).³⁴ After all, He Himself is trinitarian, communal.
6. Globalization as a phenomenon is not inconsistent with biblical values insofar as it is inclusive of diversity in the sense of freedom to make informed choices, and of pluralization in the sense of ethnicity. Therefore, uniformity (blurring of cultural distinctions) in the fashioning of multicultural churches is not a necessary expression of unity in the sense that we shall expect to see it displayed in heaven (do the peoples of the tribes, tongues, and nations lose their racial and cultural distinctives in glory just because they are unified by being in the immediate presence of the Lord and the Lamb? Not according to my reading of Rev. 7:9!). This understanding of God’s ultimate intentions therefore is that He is glorified “not [by] a diversity on the way to unity but a diversity on the way to unified diversity.”³⁵ On the other hand, where a setting engenders multiculturalism, such as in a world class city, a multicultural church is contextually sound and a foretaste of one aspect of our worship in heaven. We need both multicultural churches and homogenous unit principle style churches.
7. Where technology and relational networking enable the worldwide church to harness the disparate strengths of her presence found in virtually every nation on earth to complete the task of world evangelization, without domination by any one side of her, an invaluable synergy and witness are formed. For example, Brazilians may be more effective on tentmaking/church planting teams in North Africa than the membership of the largely Anglo-American agency they choose to partner with, but which has the training resources and experience to enhance the Latin effort. Or, British money wedded to Indian human resources in a joint venture NGO to uplift

³² The defense of Christianity as a “narrow way” is well expressed by Larry Poston, “Christianity as a Minority Religion.” in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, eds. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995).

³³ Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), pp. 170-171.

³⁴ John Piper, ‘Discipling All the Peoples.’ in Ralph Winter and Stephen Hawthorne, pp. 113-117.

³⁵ George Hunsberger, p. 253.

the downtrodden may be embraced by the Dalit community in India more readily than traditional ways of parachuting assistance in from abroad.

8. The complexities of a globalized and pluralized world cry out for discernment. Furthermore, the vulnerability and uncertainty created by living in such a world as a faithful follower of Christ should drive us to our knees: “Prayer, the seeking of God’s will amid the complex circumstances of human life, lie at the heart of discernment.”³⁶

Comment made by a great missionary statesman to the Muslim World, Samuel Zwemer, at the Keswick Convention of 1937 in England on the uniqueness of Christ (recorded in The Solitary Throne, London: Pickering & Inglis, 1937).

“All things are yours”. What does it mean? All true Christian teachers of every name—Paul and Apollos and Cephas and Wesley and Phillip Brooks and Cardinal Newman and Barth and Pascal and Papini and Spurgeon and William Booth—we do not belong to them; no, they belong to us. Every faithful minister profits the whole Church; and every member of the Church may, and ought to, derive benefit from the teachings of all. It is thus our minds are expanded beyond mere party limits and party cries into a true catholicity. . . .

The declaration “All is yours” also promises the world to Christians, pre-eminently in this sense, that all secular art and all the sciences help furnish mortar for the temple of God. Christians are not called to leave the world, or to curse the world, or to ignore the world, but to overcome the world, and to rule the world for God. Music, painting, sculpture, architecture, all the fine arts, they were given by God from the beginning to be used for the glory of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- *Do you agree with Zwemer’s interpretation of I Corinthians 3:21-22?*
- *Was he a globalizationalist ahead of his time?*
- *Was he uncritically celebrating pluralization?*
- *How did he integrate globalization and pluralization in such a way so as to be true to Scripture?*

³⁶ Richard Osmer, p. 71.