

SALVATIONISM 301

Captain Curtis Butler

INTRODUCTION Cross Cultural Ministry

Curtis serves, along with his wife, Cindy, as Corps Officer of the Gitwinksihlkw Corps in northern British Columbia. The Salvation Army has the only Christian congregation in the small native community. Curtis combines humility with compassion and a gentle sense of humour to live out the Kingdom of God in his unique setting. Curtis contributes our chapter on **ENGAGING THE CULTURE.**

What's it all about?

Cross-Cultural mission is a lot more than sending our most humble Salvationists to Outer Mongolia for life. "There is a mission across the ocean, a mission across the street, and a mission across the table" (Bill Ratcliffe).

In much of the West cultural diversity welcomes us as soon as we walk out our door. 'Conquering peoples' have made very bad mistakes in the past in the name of God.

Captain Curtis Butler helps us to wrestle with the tensions toward the end of presenting everyone, regardless of language, customs, skin colour, history, and baggage, perfect in Christ!

RESOURCES:

Books:

Fyodor Dostoevsky. THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV.
Soren Kierkegaard. THE KING AND THE MAIDEN.
Catherine Booth. AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY.
Phil Wall. I'LL FIGHT: HOLINESS AT WAR.

Movies:

THE MISSION. (depicts the European failure)
DANCES WITH WOLVES. (going native)

ONLINE:

World Prayer Center: <http://www.wpccs.org/>
Harvest Evangelism: <http://www.harvestevan.org/>
The JESUS FILM- (People get to see it in their own language): <http://www.jesusfilm.org/>
The Rutherford Institute: <http://www.rutherford.org/>
International Christian Concern: <http://www.persecution.org/>

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural One

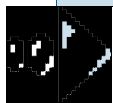
Captain Curtis Butler



"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15; and Acts 8:26-35).



"The great fundamental principle of this Salvation Army... is the law of adaptation- that is, making the means suitable to the ends" (Catherine Booth, in Roger Green, CATHERINE BOOTH. p214).



Suppose for a moment you are a visitor to Jerusalem in Roman Palestine of the mid first century AD. It is morning, during dry season. The Mediterranean sun shines brightly. You decide it is a good day to go to Gaza to see what is new by way of caravan imports from Egypt. So early in the morning you begin the seaward walk down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Another person is walking that same road and you join his company but no words are spoken between you. Suddenly you hear a man's voice coming from over a rise in the road. That voice says something that is obviously in sentence form, not gibberish, and it is obviously in another language. You turn to your traveling companion and ask for a translation. He hunches his shoulders, indicating that he doesn't understand your English. It should occur to you now that you are a stranger in a strange land. You are a foreigner in a land where conversing in English is alien. How then do you converse with your traveling companion so that you can understand what the 'voice' on the road was saying? (1)

Would it help to know the English translation? (Read Acts 8:32,33) If you look in a Biblical concordance you would find that this passage is from a Greek translation of Isaiah 53:7-8 (LXX). Now do you understand what is going on? To read this section in the context of the rest of chapter 8 you would find out that;

- The 'voice' is that of a black man from Ethiopia in Africa
- He was probably a Jew on pilgrimage
- Was returning home from Jerusalem
- He was the court treasurer for Candace, queen of Ethiopians
- Your traveling companions name was Philip (a Greek name)
- Philip is a Christian, and in the context of the book of Acts, we also know
- He is a deacon in the Church

Now that you know names, social roles, and have some minimal information about geography and time line can you interpret the passage in Acts 8:32-33? Or view it this way. If people knew only your name, social role, some of your statements, geographical and chronological information, would they really understand you? If they had some minimal information about some esoteric book you might be reading, would that enable them to understand that book and why you might be reading it? What more would they have to know?

The previous questions cover the 'who, what, when, where, and how' of the situation. But they do not address the 'why' question. To find out the 'why' - what is meant in the lives of people- requires information from the social system of the time and place of the original audience (2). The social system includes;

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural One -----●



a) Culture i.e. the accepted ways of interpreting the world and everything in it by a particular group.

b) Social structures i.e. the accepted ways of marrying, having children, working, governing, worshipping and understanding God (3).

As Christians, in order to engage the cultures around us, we must first apply the discipline of serious study to the scriptures. Bible study is hard work (4). Interpretation of the scripture, the art of hermeneutics, is serious and potentially dangerous. Jesus cautioned, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?" (Mark 12:24). The person content with 'a thought for today' is really not interested in seriously engaging the scriptures. Therefore they are not equipped to engage the cultures around them for Christ. There are those who would loudly proclaim, 'you just need to believe God will give you the words'. This approach I like to call 'the immaculate perception' (5). No need for serious, disciplined study here, just whatever I perceive the text is saying from my cultural bias is true. "These 'simple believers' who disclaim the need for hermeneutics are the most suspect interpreters of all" (6). We must ask questions of the text in order to understand the cultural context. This is called the hermeneutic of suspicion. However, many Christians are more likely to imply a suspicion of hermeneutics than a hermeneutic of suspicion (7).

Our traveling companions on the human road in the year 2000 are diverse and complex. How do we understand who they are? How do we deliver the good news that will transform their lives? Could we learn from Philip to walk along side them and listen? Then, as their fellow traveler, the opportunity will be ours to learn and to share with them the wonder-filled message about a lamb that was slain for the salvation of the whole world.

- Write as many 'why' questions of the Acts 8:35 passage as you can.
- Did this exercise open up the text more for you?

References made in this day's session:

1, 2, and 3. SOCIAL WORLD OF LUKE/ACTS. Jerome Neyrey, Editor. Ch. 1 Reading Luke. Bruce Malina. P. 3-5.

4. BINDING THE STRONG MAN. Ched Myres. P. 12.

5. SOCIAL WORLD OF LUKE/ACTS. Jerome Neyrey, Editor. Ch. 1 Reading Luke. Bruce Malina. P.7.

6. BINDING THE STRONG MAN. Ched Myres. Preface XXVII

7. BINDING THE STRONG MAN. Ched Myres. P. 12.

SALVATIONISM 301

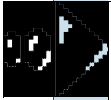
Cross Cultural Two -----●



"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul"
(1 Peter 2:11; and Genesis 22:1-14).



Salvationists "should be trained to know what the Bible is, and what the human mind is, and how to make one bear on the other, and should know how to is the truth for the Salvation of men" (Frederick Booth-Tucker).



There is no neutral ground from which to read the scriptures or view the world. Everyone who can read the Bible has a full understanding of how the world works. However, the 'world' that we understand so well is the particular world into which we have been socialized and acculturated (1). How then do we correctly divide the word of truth in a multi-cultural world?

We must be willing to suspect. God will not hand over the pearls of scripture to swine who are content to wallow in the bumper sticker mentality of 'God said it, I believe it, that settles it'. His requirement is for us to ask, seek, knock. It is ours to wrestle for its blessing into the night as Jacob, and to limp out transformed, bearing the marks of the cost. We are to call the text into question, for it testifies to the reality of Christ in the world. Put the texts on the stand; cross-examine them. Ask of their origin, their purpose, and their fulfillment. Do not let them go until they reveal their message and their power to transform.

We must also suspect our motivation to know. Is it to justify our already entrenched position? Is it to know of its transforming power as we apply it to our lives or because we want to flaunt the fact that we know? We have to be willing to suspect our interpretation. Why did we settle for a particular interpretation? Is it the most popular? Does it justify our particular position? Is it the least disturbing to the status quo? Do we know of other possible interpretations?

"We must be willing to suspect" (2). We are challenged to take our interpretation, our only interpretation, and the interpretation that we love and sacrifice it upon the altar of understanding. Only then will we be ready to hear the voice from heaven that reveals the divine alternative. Only then will the promises of God (Isaac, the promise) be unbound and set free from in-house interpretation and pithy quotes that reveal a deep well of fear and self satisfaction covered by a thin veneer of trumped up courage.

How troubled were Abraham's thoughts, how painful his steps as he made his way to Mount Moriah. Isaac was God's promise to Abraham and Sarah, God's promise to the world. Then the call came to sacrifice the promise of God. So Abraham took those painful steps, and he sacrificed. Not his son, and not only the ram. Abraham sacrificed his own interpretation of God's promise in Isaac upon the altar of obedience. Abraham trusted, not in the promise of God but in the ultimate freedom of God- God's freedom to seemingly contradict His own promise (3).

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Two



For the Church to be truly prophetic we must be open to the freedom of God. We may even need to set Him free from the thicket of a dominant cultural prejudice, reckless hermeneutics and systematic theologies that so bind him in His ministry of offering His life as an atoning sacrifice to reconcile the whole world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). We are to free God's alternative and offer it to the world. This is not the alternative of the domesticated, housebroken god of middle class America. Rather this is the alternative of the God of all nations who is alert to the realities, who does not flinch from taking sides, who sits in the divine council on the edge of His seat attentive to His special interests (4).

As His prophetic voice, the Body of Christ is to never leave the world or hide from its pain and shame. The image of Christ pouring Himself out for the world's redemption is a call for us to follow Him and to engage the world.

Yet the fact that we proclaim the alternative of God dictates that we can never cleave to this world's systems. The prophet is to stand firmly in the reality of culture while proclaiming the words of God's freedom as the divine alternative.

The gospel is not a message of personal salvation from the world, but a message of a God who so loves the world that He desires to transform it right down to its basic structures.



1. What are the lenses through which you view the world, and the Scriptures?
2. How can knowing this help you preach the Kingdom this week?
3. How open are you to God's freedom? How about your Corps?
4. What aspects of your cultures have you adopted as part of your Gospel?
5. What are the essentials, the non-negotiables of the Gospel (make a list)? Do you think this list is the same as a list by a solid soldier on the other side of the world from you?



References made in today's session:

1. SOCIAL WORLD OF LUKE/ACTS. Jerome Neyrey, Editor. Ch. 1 Reading Luke. Bruce Malina. P. 8,9.
2. Paul Ricoeur, in BINDING THE STRONG MAN. Myres, Ched. P. 3.
3. PROPHETIC IMAGINATION. Brueggemann, Walter. P. 18.
4. PROPHETIC IMAGINATION. Brueggemann, Walter. P 24.

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Three -----●



"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:1-13).



The first three hundred years of the Christian Church was wrought with persecution, powerlessness, and growth - phenomenal growth. The growth came because Christians lived out a life of love in the face of a powerful empire that at times violently and vigorously oppressed them. They resolved to have died to self and to live for Christ. Death didn't scare them: they were already dead. Power didn't tempt them because they knew that when they were weak only then were they strong. Possessions didn't ensnare their hearts because they already counted everything as dung compared to their riches in Christ.

However, all that changed when a Christian ascended the throne of the empire. The year was 312 AD, the emperor was Constantine, and the document was the edict of Milan. The edict declared that from that day on Christianity would be the official religion of the empire. And the Church wasted no time in using its newfound position of power, when in the year 316 it appealed to the empire to persecute a schism of the Church in North Africa. The Church, by embracing its position in the empire and by enforcing the power of the empire lost its capacity to communicate love. Love cannot be communicated with power (1). The middle class Christianity so typical of Western Protestantism refuses to face up to the fact that Jesus calls for the abandonment of power. "Resist not evil" is core to the gospel. "Love your enemies" is a paramount doctrine of Christ. Yet throughout the church age we have seen the Church abdicate its role as 'Herald', the voice of one calling in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord', and assumed the role of 'Harlot', intoxicated with power. From the Crusades, the inquisition, colonialism, Salam witch hunts, the deafness to the cry of European Jews in Nazi Germany, the muteness to world nuclear arms race, to the segregation of women from leadership, blacks from white schools, aboriginals to poverty stricken reservations, in its idolatry in bowing down in worship to the god of nationalism, the Church has been power drunk. The church loses its prophetic voice when it is afraid to, or refuses to speak for fear of losing power. If the Church is not speaking prophetically then its only other role is to be complaisant toward the empire, where at best it never challenges the status quo or at worst becomes part of the propaganda that legitimizes the empire's power.

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Three



As we seek opportunities to engage other cultures we must first be aware of the position from which we minister. The view of the incarnation in Philippians 2 is that though Christ possessed all the power of God, He willingly laid it aside and became a servant, not seeking to grasp by force equality with God. That is how God through His Son Jesus Christ engages the culture of this world. The Word came to the world in humility, motivated by love (John 3:16). As we bring that same word to other cultures that same mind has to be in us- for love cannot be communicated from a position of power.

The Church has been entrusted with the greatest news the world has ever heard. The Creator of all things in heaven, on earth, visible, invisible, thrones, powers, rulers, authorities, all things were created by Him and in Him all things are held together (Colossians 1:16,17) has revealed Himself to us in love and humility. This same Creator revealed in Christ Jesus suffered for the sins of all the created order so that He (God) might be reconciled to us (2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:20; Romans 5:10). So let us present that message to others the way God presented it to us, in love (1 John 4:9-11). "For the illusion of being superior to others engenders the need to prove it, and so oppression is born" (2).



1. "Love cannot be communicated from power." What are some ways you or your Corps have tried to do this? What are some alternatives?
2. What role can identificational repentance play with regard to some of the corporate sins listed in today's session, and others that are locally specific?
3. How can we embrace the position of persecuted in humility?



Try spending a whole day in a part of your town that is culturally different. Eat your food there. Visit the local religious hall. Recreate with the people. Note how your minority position, in dress, in skin-colour, in language, feels to you. Debrief and determine how you can cut some of the cultural accretions to your version of the Gospel to make it more accessible to these people.

References made in this day's session:

1. THE POWER DELUSION. Campolo, Anthony. Ch3.
 2. BECOMING HUMAN. Vanier, Jean. pg. 38.
- A HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. (4th ed.). Walker, Williston. pg. 130, 131.



SALVATIONISM 301

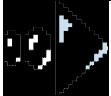
Cross Cultural Four



"Lord, who may dwell in Your sanctuary? Who may live on Your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, and who does his neighbour no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man, who despises a vile man but honours those who fear the LORD, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken" (Psalm 15; and also Amos 1-3).



"And none shall ask what they have been, provided that their robes are clean" (John Gowans, SASB 170).



"No text speaks for itself; it is vulnerable dependent upon an interpreter to restore its voice" (1). This is the act of hermeneutics. 'Hermes' was the messenger of the gods in the Greek pantheon; it is easy to see why they derive the word for interpretation from his name. Hermes was also, however, the patron god of invention, cunning, and theft (2). The lesson is clear for those who seek to interpret the scripture inter-culturally. The critical task of restoring the authentic voice of text can all too easily turn into robbery or manipulation.

The message of the Body is to Christ and Him crucified. However, where the audience was perceived to be inferior or pagan, culture became the measuring rod to determine how 'Christian' the audience was. So rather than preaching Christ the message preached was Christianity and the mission became to make 'them' like 'us'.

For instance, in the context of the European encounter with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the cultural norms of the dominant culture were forced or coerced upon the 'Indian' convert: native dress discarded in favour of shirt and tie; native hairstyle rejected for over-the-ears trim, Indian name dropped for 'Christian' name; native language discarded for English; native musical instruments abandoned for the piano or guitar; native style music replaced by European hymns; native social relationships (feasts, ceremonies) and duties substituted by nuclear family and church obligations. The result of the complete rejection of 'Indian' culture was a 'white Indian' Christian (3).

Often, the Body has had the privilege to enter cultures that did not know, "the good news of great joy for ALL people." However, rather than preach the good news about Christ we preached the cultural myth of Christianity with the signs of salvation being baptism, catechism, dress codes and the language and symbols of the Christianizing culture. As one aboriginal elder on the Northwest coast expressed it, "we accepted Christ and we got the Church."

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Four -----●



Culture itself is neither good nor evil. Culture simply defines you as a part of a people, tribe, tongue, or nation. All cultural systems have good aspects that serve to govern a people by a certain implicit code. However, all cultural systems are subject to the fall and as such need to be subjected to God through Christ. The problem has been that European-American Christians have had difficulty seeing Christ apart from culture- their culture.

God is not the God of a select few. Yahweh is the God of all nations- and He calls all nations to account. For all nations are without excuse for they are to adhere to the revelation God has given them, Christian or non-Christian (Romans 1:20; Romans 2:13-15). The prophet Amos introduces us to a God whose judgment and grace is not reserved for a select few but extends to all nations. The word of judgment reveals a God who will hold the nations morally accountable. The God of Amos knows and cares about the moral conduct of all people, even Israel's enemies (4).

The message for the Army in mission is obvious. We are ambassadors for a God who has regard for all peoples everywhere. He cares especially, "for those who might be victimized or oppressed, whether or not they know to call on the divine name in the manner of our religious practice" (5).



Comment on the following:

- 'All systems were created by God' (Colossians 1:15-17)
- 'All systems are subject to the fall' (Romans 8:18-21)
- 'All systems can be redeemed' (2 Corinthians 5:16-20) (Walter Wink)

Where, if at all does the above statement break down?

The text of the New Testament are occasional writings written for a specific audience at a particular time dealing with specific questions and crisis" (6). If we accept this statement as true, what then is the essence of the Gospel?



References made in this day's session:

- 1, 2. BINDING THE STRONG MAN. Myres, Ched. P. 4.
3. NATIVE AND CHRISTIAN: The meeting of two ways. Jacobs, Adrian. P.186.
- 4,5. HOSEA, JOEL, and AMOS. Birch, Bruce. P.182.
6. PAUL, IN OTHER WORDS: Cultural Reading of His Letters. Neyrey, Jerome. P.18.



SALVATIONISM 301

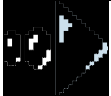
Cross Cultural Five -----●



"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10).



What are the heathen? I sometimes feel and fear when we talk about them that some of my comrades regard them very much as they regard trees in a forest, or cabbages in a vast prairie, or, at the best, as a race of monkeys in a little superior order to the ordinary dun of creatures of the tribe. But has not the day come for us Salvationists to leave all those proud notions of superiority and those hateful prejudices behind? (William Booth, INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS Address).



Blaise Pascal once said, "If we submit everything to reason our religion will be left with nothing that is mysterious or transcendent" (1). One of the major interpretative problems of bible interpretation inter-culturally is the societal context from which and to which it is presented.

Low/High Context: Sociologists divide cultures into two contexts. Low and high cultures are categorised by the level of detail in text (how much of the culture is 'spelled out' and how much is left to the imagination). In low cultures most things must be clearly set out and information must be continually added if meaning is to be constant. The dominant cultures of North America and Northern Europe are typical of low context societies. These cultures leave no room for myth and will even try to reduce God, His blessings, and prayer into knowable, reproducible formulae for success. Juxtaposed to this cultural reality are high context cultures. These cultures are either oral cultures or produce sketchy and impressionistic text, leaving much to the hearers' or readers' imagination. Much of life is assumed because people have been socialized into shared ways of viewing the world. People know, for example, that kings go off to war at the end of the rainy season (2 Samuel 2:1) for their world is divided into rainy season and dry season. So there is no need to explain this division of time (2).

The Biblical eastern Mediterranean and many aboriginal cultures are representative of high context societies. In high context societies myth and mystery are embraced and become vehicles to tell the story of a people. When events or forces were too complex or too powerful to be analyzed they were transferred to the generations in the form of myth and story. Clearly the Bible is written in high context language, not shy of myth. Throughout the scriptural record we are introduced to mythical images and characters. In the apocalyptic writings mythic creatures fight mythic wars. There, the seven-headed hydra emerges out of a chaotic sea to wage war (Revelation 13:7). This is the Leviathan or Rahab of ancient mythology (Job 9:13; Isaiah 51:9; Psalm 74:12-14). This was the image of chaos that troubled the mythical sea of Genesis 1:2. The Revelation uses mythical language to tell us of the ultimate victory of order over chaos.

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Five



One of the difficulties then of encountering culture is for low context, reasoned, systematic evangelists attempting to relate in a high context society. Attuned to detail, they simply do not know what is assumed in a high context culture.

However, if we allow the myths to be heard, and allow the mystery to go unexplained, then we may be granted the opportunity to learn and to envision how God determines to reinterpret the story or myth in light of the Gospel. The world is inundated with myth, most implicit and few challenged or explained. The gods are alive and well and some have overstepped their bounds assuming power that is not rightfully their's. They need the message of the Gospel to put them in their proper place in God's heavenly council. This is the Body's charter (Ephesians 3:10) (3).



- 1) Jesus re-interprets Jewish history. In Luke's account of the Last Supper what does Jesus instruct his disciples to remember?
- 2) What is everyone else who is observing the feast remembering?
- 3) Many cultures around the world have a creation story and a flood story. Could this have been interpreted to them through their prophets by God?
- 4) Is it a threat or a confirmation to hear other creation and flood stories?
- 5) In Acts 17:22-34 what does the Jew, Paul, use to illustrate his sermon? Who does he quote as support for his sermon? Does he mention Jesus Christ in his sermon? Paul, from a high context culture, is completely at ease in talking about the cosmology of another high context culture and in seeking its reinterpretation in light of the gospel (17:30).



References made in this day's session:

1. THE MIND OF FIRE: An Anthology of the Writings of Blaise Pascal. P. 169.
2. SOCIAL WORLD OF LUKE/ACTS. Neyrey, Jerome. P. 19, 20.
3. GOD IN THE DOCK: Myth Became Fact. Lewis, C.S. P. 67.



SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Six



"Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-- why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey-- the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:1-10).



Commission of Frederick Tucker to India: "Go to India, dress like the Indian..."



If we live in middle class western society and belong to the dominant culture then we must understand that we are, "doing theology from Pharaoh's court" (1). The Body in WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) America is not persecuted. Oh, it kicks and screams and cries 'oppression' when it can't exert the power it desires. It will draw attention to the fact that the Lord's Prayer is taken out of schools as signs of persecution. My question is, "Who is responsible for taking the Lord's Prayer out of Christian homes, or out of Christian churches?" The Church of middle class western society operates from a position of power. And particularly in North America the Church justifies this power play from the combined erroneous myths of manifest destiny and Christian nation.

The first European settlers to the America's came largely because of political and religious oppression in their own countries. The major motif of colonialism was that of Exodus and Promised Land. It was seen by Europeans as manifest destiny that they inherit the land and possess it. The divine choosing was so obvious to them that they took it as their divine prerogative to dispossess and destroy the indigenes that were before them. They implemented the same system in North and South America that they sought to leave. The only difference is that now they were in the seat of Pharaoh the oppressor. They had become what they hated.

The conquest of the promised land of the Americas was and is preached as manifest destiny. "How then do the indigenous peoples of the Americas fit into that story? It was obvious they were the Canaanites and as such were seen as justly exposed to the wrath of God so that the manifest destiny of a Christian nation might be fulfilled" (2).

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Six



To engage other cultures for Christ we need to understand that there is no such thing as a neutral place from which to view the world. We all operate from a cultural perspective. Therefore, it is imperative that we recognize our own cultural myths in order to engage the mythic foundation of other cultures. For any engagement of cultures is an engagement of myths. The modern day prophet Martin Luther King Jr. understood this. At the outset of the civil rights movement this modern day Moses marched on Washington, D.C., the heart of the mythic Christian nation, and proclaimed in the hearing of Pharaoh, "Let my people go." But how hard was Pharaoh's heart? Note the race riots spawned by a threatened dominant culture. Note the resistance to lifting the segregation of schools and churches. See how they sought to still the voice of the prophet.

Can the Body effectively minister from Pharaoh's court? Yes, but with difficulty. First it has to realize its responsibilities to the 'Canaanites' (Exodus 22:21). It must rise above the erroneous myths of 'manifest destiny' and 'Christian nation' and embrace the God of all nations and seek to listen to Him rather than speak for Him.

Also, to effectively minister from Pharaoh's court the Body will need to rethink how it handles the power of money and charity. The Church has been rightly criticized for the way it administers charity. It has gone into needy countries and areas of need (e.g. North American aboriginal reserves) with big budget looking for a return on investment. Too often, you hear church faithful ask, "How many of them got saved?" or wonder at lack of results, "after all we've done for them." This has had the effect of people who receive help from Christian organizations to become Christians, nominally anyway, in order to receive a more favourable place in line. Rice Christians, we call them. Now the question is being asked, is there such a thing as rice Christian? However, the question we should ask is, "Is there any such thing as a rice missionary?" When Jesus fed the five thousand what was recorded was how many were served, not how many were saved. And the bottom line was not at what expense but rather what surplus the disciples still had at their disposal.



- 1) Can we have a God of conquest without a God of oppression? (Deuteronomy 7)
- 2) In light of Luke 10:25-37 what other motif is appropriate for church in mission besides Exodus- conquest?
- 3) Is it plausible to suggest that the book of Ruth is a protest to Deuteronomy 7?
- 4) For further reading on human freedom, dignity and charity read "The myth of the Grand Inquisitor" from THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV by Dostoyevsky.



References made in this day's session:

1. BINDING THE STRONG MAN. Myres, Ched. Pg. 7.
2. NATIVE CHRISTIANITY: Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians. Deloria, Vine.
- THE EARTH SHALL WEEP: A History of North America from A First Nations Perspective.

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Seven -----●



"This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message: "Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless, or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears My Name, and say, "We are safe"-- safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears My Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD. "Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for My Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears My Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your fathers. I will thrust you from My presence, just as I did all your brothers, the people of Ephraim.' "So do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with Me, for I will not listen to you. Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger. But am I the one they are provoking? declares the LORD. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame? 'Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched. ""This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves! For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be My people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you. But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward. From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you My servants the prophets. But they did not listen to Me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.' "When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer. Therefore say to them, 'This is the nation that has not obeyed the LORD its God or responded to correction. Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips. Cut off your hair and throw it away; take up a lament on the barren heights, for the LORD has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under His wrath. ""The people of Judah have done evil in My eyes, declares the LORD. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears My Name and have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of M mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. Then the carcasses of this people will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away. I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate" (Jeremiah 7).

SALVATIONISM 301

Cross Cultural Seven -----●



In these lessons I have deliberately stayed away from the specifics of other cultures or world religions. The main reason for this is that I am woefully ignorant of these topics. Besides, Christian bookstores carry an abundance of 'how to talk' books (i.e. How to talk to a J.W., a mormom, a buddhist, etc.) all written by more informed people than me. Another reason I've approached this topic the way I have is that I feel to encounter other cultures for Christ we have to recognize that the onus is upon the messenger to correctly divide the word of truth (and Romans 10:11-15). People cannot be accused of rejecting the gospel if the messenger has been delinquent in presenting it, or has preached cultural Christianity rather than Christ crucified. So, as messenger, it is imperative that we truly understand the message. To do that we must admit that the message comes to us couched in the context of another culture, the eastern Mediterranean, and another time- two millennia ago. The messenger has the task of correctly interpreting the message in our time and to the whole world.

History reveals to us that the messenger has not always been faithful to the message. This has been most obvious when the Church sided with the power of the empire in order to present a message at sacrificial love. Love cannot be communicated from a position of power. It has been the misfortune of the Church to adhere to the ancient myth of redemptive violence in the name of the Prince of Peace. Redemptive violence is where the 'hero' breaks the rules of justice, law, and order to restore justice, law, and order (1). In the missionary zeal of first contact with the residents of the Americas, the missionary societies actually would buy or kidnap people, usually young people, and take them to Europe or some mission station in order to 'civilize' the pagan (2). This practice isn't ancient history. The legacy of Church-run, government-funded residential schools for First Nations children is continually in the news. I doubt this atrocity would have happened if the messenger had been faithful in presenting the message of righteousness and justice rather than being complicit with racist governmental policies. The Church abdicated its role as herald of good news of great joy for all nations; instead it embraced that of harlot soliciting at the feet of the powers. As those who are called to represent Christ in the world, to be His ambassadors, "we can have only two approaches to the cultures of this world. One is escape, the other is engage. Escape means turning our backs on the world in rejection" (3), or shouting at it through stained glass or over the din of brass bands, "seeking to wash our hands of the unclean thing... only to find with Pontius Pilate that the responsibility does not come off in the wash- and steeling our hearts against its agonized cries for help" (4).

In contrast, to engage the culture of our world means to turn our face toward it in compassion, not pity, and to get our hands dirty, sore, and worn in its service, and to feel deep within us the stirring of the love of God which cannot be contained. Surely we cannot continue to fall victim to the myth of redemptive violence otherwise known as the Babylonian creation story. For this myth speaks for God; it does not listen for God to speak. It does not seek God in order to change, but claims God in order to prevent change. Its God is not the impartial ruler of all nations but a biased and partial tribal god worshipped as an idol. Its metaphor is not journey but fortress. Its symbol is not the cross but a rod of iron. It offers not forgiveness but victory. Its good news is not unconditional love of enemies but their final liquidation. It is blasphemous and idolatrous. And it is immensely popular within the Church.

References made in this day's session:

1. ENGAGING THE POWERS. Wink, Walter. Pg. 17.
2. SAVAGE: Life and Times of Jemmy Button. Hazlewood, Nick.
4. DECISIVE ISSUES FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY. Stott, John. Pg. 14.
5. EXILE AND HOMECOMING: A Commentary on Jeremiah. Brueggemann, Walter. Pg. 78, 79.

