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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN THE RESURGENCE OF PAGANISM IN WESTERN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The “resurgence” of Paganism in Western Europe has occasioned a response to western Christianity that has presumably neglected the environment, exerted male dominance, demythologized the world and exalted reason above creativity. This essay will discuss some factors that have contributed to this resurgence and paganism’s critique of western Christianity. Then, utilizing Lesslie Newbigin and Paul Hiebert it will make suggestions for a missiological agenda to encounter Paganism. This study represents initial research for understanding the growth of Paganism. Further research is currently ongoing.

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Neo-paganism has risen in a post-Christian context from old European traditions. Marc Spindler states that, “For a significant number of people, European neo-paganism is an ideology of resistance against global systems, drawing upon mythical elements in the pre-Christian tradition of European cultures.”¹ Here, we will consider some of the factors that have contributed to the resurgence of Paganism.

Estimates of Pagan Adherents

Worldwide estimates of the adherents of Paganism range from several hundred thousand to more than three million.² Whatever the correct statistic, it is generally agreed that it is difficult to estimate the number of Pagans since there is no overarching structure or hierarchy. Nonetheless, Thomas Luckmann suggests that this “new” religious movement is one of the most successful purveyors of worldview in the religiously pluralistic marketplace of Europe.³

In 1996 the Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust reported that,

¹Marc Spindler, “Europe’s Neo-paganism,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 1 (1987): 10.

²Information compiled from www.adherents.com/Na_454.html

³Thomas Luckmann, “The Religious Situation in Europe: The Background to Contemporary Conversion,” *Social Compass* 46, no. 3 (1999): 254.

There are at least 25,000 Pagans living, working and practising in Britain, but this is a conservative estimate, since there is no centralised body. Comparably, the Society of Friends, or Quakers, in Britain number only 20,000.⁴

In 1999 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that an undocumented 1997 study indicated there were approximately 100,000 practicing Pagans in the United Kingdom, an increase of 95,000 since 1990. The same report stated that the Pagan Federation, an organization founded in 1971 to provide information about Paganism and to counter misconceptions regarding the religion, received 100 inquiries a month from potential adherents.⁵ The BBC reported that on 21 June 2001 ten thousand people gathered at Stonehenge to celebrate the summer solstice, an increase of 2,000 from the year before.⁶ The forthcoming census of the United Kingdom should shed more light on the actual statistics.⁷

Estimates for other European countries are not readily available. However, Pagans in Italy and Portugal are preparing for Pagan Pride Day in September 2002. The previous year saw 17,494 Pagans gather at 76 different events in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal and Brazil. This represented an increase of over 8,000 compared to 2000's attendance.⁸ The Order of Bards, Druids and Ovates reports the

⁴Information from www.demon.co.uk/charities/PHFT/what_is_pag.html accessed 26 April, 2002.

⁵BBC News, "UK Pagans celebrate as numbers soar," Sunday, 31 October, 1999.

⁶BBC News, "Solstice dawns over Stonehenge," Thursday, 21 June, 2001.

⁷Conducted on 29 April 2001 and includes Pagan religious designations as options for religious affiliations.

⁸Information from <http://paganpride.org/what/releases/2001.html>. Accessed 27 April, 2002.

presence of affiliated groups in the Netherlands, Germany and the Czech Republic.⁹ Yet, the resurgence of Paganism is not limited to Europe.

Based on a ten-year study of covens of witches, Helen Berger estimates that there could be as many as 200,000 witches in the United States.¹⁰ An earlier study conducted in San Francisco by Aidan Kelly estimated the number of Wiccans at 300,000. However, the methodology employed by Kelly is questionable. Berger states,

This is probably an over-estimation, as in each of the three methods he uses, Kelly is gauging the number of covens in the U.S. and multiplying the number of covens by ten, which he believes is the average coven membership. Ten members is plausibly the typical size of a coven, but it is probably not the average size, since there are probably more covens with a membership of less than ten than a membership of more than ten.¹¹

While Wicca does not encompass the entire Pagan community it does give an indication of the growth of Pagan religions in the West.

In 1999 the Pagan Education Network reported that,

Since it is not an organized movement, it is very difficult to determine the number of its practitioners, but it is estimated that there are between 100,000 and 600,000 in the U.S. alone. Some have termed Paganism the fastest-growing religion in the West.¹²

Barry Kosim and Egon Mayer conducted a more scientific study in 2001 entitled the American Religious Identification Survey. The survey generated more than a hundred different categories which were filtered down to sixty-five by the researchers. Compared

⁹Information from <http://druidry.org/obod/maps/europe.html>. Accessed 26 April 2002.

¹⁰Helen Berger, *Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 9.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Information from www.bloomington.in.us/~pen/mpagan.html. Accessed 26 April, 2002.

with a previous study conducted in 1990, the National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI), from which ARIS was modeled, Wicca grew from 8,000 to 134,000. While the categories of Druid and Pagan were not a part of the NSRI they comprised 33,000 and 140,000 respectively in 2001.¹³

In 1996, Australia and New Zealand included Pagan designations on their censuses. The Australian census on religion reported that five percent of the country's population was self-identified as adherents to Paganism (4,353), Wicca/Witchcraft (1,849), Pantheism (835), Nature Religions (1,734), Druidism (554).¹⁴ The census in New Zealand reported that 792 people self identified with Wicca and 669 self identified with Nature Religion.¹⁵ Based on these somewhat ambiguous statistics, it seems apparent that Paganism is reviving in Western society and, in some cases, the growth rate seems to be nothing less than phenomenal.

Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Paganism

There are at least five factors that have contributed to the resurgence of Paganism in western society. Individually, these factors, while significant, cannot be thought of as definitive contributions. In other words, it seems apparent that these five factors have worked concomitantly and have opened the door to further exploration of religious identity.

¹³Information from www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/key_findings.htm. Accessed 26 April, 2002.

¹⁴Information from <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rn/1997-98/98rn27.htm>. Accessed 26 April, 2002.

¹⁵Information from www.vision-nz.co.nz/censnon.htm. Accessed 26 April, 2002.

Christianization Versus Evangelization of Western Europe

Since the so-called conversion of Constantine, the Christian church enjoyed a position of privilege unprecedented in its brief history. The religious edicts of toleration (314 A.D. and 324 A.D.) provided a milieu of religious pluralism; however, it was not long before the church began to suppress the religious beliefs of pagans. Almost as a foreshadowing of Enlightenment rationalism, Constantine's heirs issued a law against superstitions and sacrifice (341 A.D.).¹⁶ In spite of the state and church's efforts, from time to time paganism enjoyed moments of revivals that sought to reinstate the priesthood and restore pagan shrines. It was not until the Visigoth Alaric's sack of Rome (410 A.D.) that organized paganism ceased. However, the writings and decrees of history from Augustine to the antiquarians of the 19th century testify to a remnant of pagan beliefs and practices among common people.¹⁷

The privileged position that Christianity enjoyed after Constantine's conversion summarily oppressed religious others. Eighty years after Constantine's conversion, Augustine's theological justification for the use of diverse means to convert heretics set the agenda for the advancement of Christianity on the continent. Thomas Aquinas believed that this justified the use of force against those who opposed the Catholic Church. The result of this method of enticing Pagans to become Christian caused paganism to go underground.

¹⁶ Gerald Bonner, "The Extinction of Paganism and the Church Historian," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35, no. 3 (1984): 346.

¹⁷ Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London: Routledge, 1995), 72-73.

Many pagan practices were integrated into the church and were never completely extinguished. In one sense, it is incorrect to talk of a resurgence of paganism; however, since the turn of the twentieth century paganism has increasingly gained a voice in the academy and popular culture. William Edgar stating Alain De Benoist's position, "Paganism has never been very far away from us, both in history and in the sub-conscious mind, as well as in ritual, in literature, and so forth."¹⁸ For all practical purposes, paganism was hiding in the church.

Christianity became the dominant belief system in the Middle Ages, but not without having been profoundly influenced by its pagan antagonists.¹⁹ Frend describes the context as "a world in which the Christian was slowly absorbing the pagan classical past into a new imperial Christianity."²⁰ The Christianization of pagan practices provided elements of continuity in the new religious lives of converts.²¹ Rituals and festivals were Christianized and infused with new meaning while saints and martyrs replaced local deities; all officially sanctioned by the church only to be liberated by the pagan masses as expressions of identity.²² These ancient systems of varying beliefs survived in the subconscious of their adherents who called themselves Christians.²³

¹⁸William Edgar, "New Right -- Old Paganism: Anatomy of a French Movement," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 37, no. 4 (1983): 308.

¹⁹Bonner, "The Extinction of Paganism," 341.

²⁰ W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 563.

²¹ Bonner, "The Extinction of Paganism," 350.

²² Prudence Jones, "The European Native Tradition" in *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* ed. Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1998), 85; J. N. Hillgarth, "Modes of Evangelization of Western Europe in the Seventh Century," in *Irland und die*

Those special people who believed in their local spirits, who cultivated psychic or magic powers, who told and retold their ancient myths, who cast spells and performed divinations, who dressed in animal skins – almost all considered themselves Christian once Christianity had arrived and established itself, although in rural areas this may have amounted to no more than a nominal Christianity.²⁴

The Disenchantment and Re-enchantment of the World

It was not until the Reformers confronted the church and ultimately posited personal salvation without the need of ritual that Christianity in its Protestant form was to some degree free from pagan influence. Jones and Pennick write,

The reform movements within Catholicism which crystallised into the Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century brought about a desire for simplicity of ritual and belief which rejected many of the compromises which the Church had made with Pagan practice.²⁵

Summarily, Protestant Christianity promoted a disenchantment with the world and, combined with the rationalism of modernity, relied on human ability to solve the problems of the supernatural. Consequently, modern science replaced faith and questions of ultimate meaning were resolved by reason.

Concomitantly, the Enlightenment project postulated that knowledge was the key to unlocking the secrets of the universe. Knowledge, to the modern mind, was objective and certain. The ability of the individual to obtain knowledge was limitless and once

Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission, ed. Proinseas Ni Chathain and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 325-327.

²³Christina Oakley, "Druids and Witches: History, Archetype and Identity," in *The Druid Renaissance: The Voice of Druidry Today*, ed. Philip Carr-Gomm (London: Thorsons, 1996), 278.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Jones and Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, 203.

obtained the individual could master nature for the benefit of humanity and thus secure a better world.²⁶ Newbigin asserted that,

While the Catholic church had attempted to erect barriers against the Enlightenment, the Protestant churches had, in effect, surrendered the public field – politics, education, industry, economics – to the ideology of the Enlightenment and sought refuge in the private world of the home and the soul.²⁷

As an ideology, modernity, in Thomas Oden's words, has spun out in moral decline. The one-time enchantment of triumphalistic technological advances, the Enlightenment project, quantifying empiricism and inevitable historical progress has resulted in a moral tailspin of "sexual, interpersonal and familial wreckage."²⁸ Similarly, what was once thought to be a natural outcome of modernization, namely secularization, has been demonstrated to be inadequate.²⁹ The expected decline of the influence of religion on society as a result of modernity has not come to fruition. In fact, the world, and in the case at hand, western society, is becoming increasingly more religious or better re-enchanted.

The re-enchantment of the world is a characteristic feature of postmodernity. Oden does not see postmodernity as a rejection of modernity's ideology for "there is no

²⁶Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 3-4.

²⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 69.

²⁸Thomas C. Oden, "The Death of Modernity and Postmodern Evangelical Spirituality" in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* 2 ed., ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 24-25.

²⁹See Grace Davie, "Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?," *Social Compass* 37, no. 4 (1990); Rodney Stark, "Secularization R. I. P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999); Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

reason to fight something that is already dead.”³⁰ Rather, postmodernity views modernity as “defunct, obsolete, passé, antiquated.”³¹ He defines postmodernity in light of the failure of modernity to fulfill meaning in life. The postmodern ideology, then, is described as a “hunger for means of social maintenance, continuity, intergenerational traditioning, historical awareness, freedom from the repressions of modernity.”³² Postmodernity is in search of what modernity failed to find and while modernity was searching it left a tremendous wake of wreckage in its path.

From this vantage point of the re-enchantment of the world it is easy to understand the resurgence of neo-paganism. Wilkinson writes,

It is not so surprising, then, that in the contemporary longing for an escape from the modern (which is manifested most dramatically in the cities), many are turning to the ancient religions of the countryside, and arguing that Christianity has little to offer those concerned with the cycle of nature.³³

However, it was not simply a re-enchantment of the world that has occasioned the resurgence of paganism in Western Europe. Globalization has also played an important role.

Globalization

John Tomlinson defines globalization as the “rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social

³⁰Oden, “The Death of Modernity,” 21.

³¹Ibid.

³²Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology: Recovering Christian Roots* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 38.

³³Loren Wilkinson, “Circles and the Cross: Reflections on Neo-Paganism, Postmodernity, and Celtic Christianity,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 22 (1998): 30.

life.”³⁴ While to some degree there is a homogenization of the world inherent in globalization, the term is better understood in the context of an interaction between traditional ways of life and the worldwide impact of modernization. Harold Netland states that globalization has its roots in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Citing Malcolm Waters, globalization is “the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonization and cultural mimesis.”³⁵ In this sense, globalization seems to be a euphemism for colonialization. However, Anthony Giddens suggests, “Although still dominated by Western power, globalization today can no longer be spoken of only as a matter of one-way imperialism.”³⁶ Just as the West influenced other parts of the world so now other parts of the world are influencing the West.

The result of globalization has been a legitimization of multiple worldviews. Peter Beyer suggests that this legitimization constitutes a worldwide culture of pluralism.³⁷ The rise of pagan religion simply testifies to “the critique and confirmation of contemporary social normality.”³⁸ Beyer states, “What makes the rise of contemporary nature religion genuinely intriguing is not simply its counter-structural or even counter-cultural symbolic strategy, but the intricate links between the latter and the values and dominant structures of

³⁴John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1999), 2.

³⁵ Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to the Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity, 2001), 82.

³⁶ Anthony Giddens, “Living in a Post-Traditional Society,” in *Reflexive Modernization*, ed. U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), 96; as quoted in Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 92.

³⁷ Peter Beyer, “Globalisation and the Religion of Nature,” in *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* ed. Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1998), 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

global society.”³⁹ The values Beyer refers to as representative of global society include particularity and exclusivity as well as anti-institutionalism.

The Inadequacy of Western Christianity

Western Christianity is increasingly thought of as inadequate in answering the questions of post-Christian West Europeans. In fact, Newbigin writes, “This paganism is born out of a rejection of Christianity.”⁴⁰ He suggests that Western Christianity needs to consider how it is viewed by religious others in order to formulate an appropriate response to the search for meaning.⁴¹ It is to that critique we now turn.

Neo-pagans look at the Christian era as one of destruction and futility. To them, Christianity has been an oppressive force that has stifled the position of women and disregarded the environment. Western Christianity has been characterized by pagans as having an emphasis on the primacy of the male as normative for humanity, not to mention its disregard for nature in the name of progress.⁴² Similarly, it is characterized by its emphasis on reason at the expense of the imagination. Its reliance on rationalism resulted in the demythologization of the universe. The spiritual and intellectual link in Christianity has not permitted the mysteries tolerated by other religions.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, “Can the West be Converted?,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 1 (1987): 7.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Oliver Davies, “An Introduction to Celtic Spirituality” in *Celtic Spirituality*, ed. Oliver Davies (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 24.

⁴³ Thomas Molnar, “From Christianity to Paganism,” *Epiphany Journal* 8 (Summer 1988): 20.

Philip Carr-Gomm, leader of one of the largest pagan organizations, The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, suggests that the resurgence of paganism is due to the failing of “established” religions to meet the spiritual needs of people as well as the environmental crisis brought on by the dualism and authoritarianism of these religions.⁴⁴ It critiques monotheism as unfavorable to pluralism since it posits one God who imposes one truth on the entire human race.⁴⁵

Thus, Jones and Pennick assert that the impetus for the resurgence of paganism has been a response to the desire to put humanity back in a general context. That context is one that is physical and chronological: physical in the sense that the natural world is an indispensable part of life and chronological in the sense of continuity with ancient philosophies.⁴⁶ It offers a “possible religious philosophy for a pluralistic, multicultural society.”⁴⁷

Search for Identity

For centuries Christianity offered Western Europe an identity, but in recent years the rejection of Christianity has suggested that it continues to search. While the formation of the European Union promises to create a new identity it faces challenges due to the fact that West Europeans view themselves in relation to their ethnicity. With the void

⁴⁴ Philip Carr-Gomm, “The Door” in *The Druid Renaissance: The Voice of Druidry Today*, ed. Philip Carr-Gomm (London: Thorsons, 1996), 4.

⁴⁵ Andre Dumas, “The New Attraction of Neo-Paganism: A Political, Cultural and Spiritual Phenomenon or Epiphenomenon” in *Monotheism*, ed. Claude Geffre and Jean-Pierre Jossua (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 83.

⁴⁶Jones and Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, 3.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 220.

that has been left by Christianity's inability to relate to the issues confronting people, West Europeans are increasingly looking for ways to fill it. Due in part to globalization, eastern philosophies have legitimized mysteries that were once thought of as superstitious and this has precipitated an exploration of pre-Christian religions.

The Missiological Agendas of Newbigin and Hiebert

Two missiologists will now be considered for insights into a missiological agenda to encounter pagan religion. To some degree both recognize folk beliefs in the church. Hiebert calls it split-level Christianity. Based on Bulatao, he sees a two-tier Christianity around the world in churches planted among traditional religionists. His agenda constitutes a call to greater care in how Christianity is contextualized. Hiebert provides a missiologically oriented agenda for encountering pagan religions.

Lesslie Newbigin sees an inadequacy of the Western church to answer the needs of people living in a post-Christian era. It is due to this inadequacy that pagan religions have resurfaced in Europe. Thus, Newbigin provides an ecclesiological oriented agenda for encountering pagan religions. Both Hiebert and Newbigin's ideas provide a continuity in holistic Christianity.

Lesslie Newbigin

In his insightful article "Can the West be Converted?," Lesslie Newbigin sets out six points of an agenda for the conversion of the Western Europe.⁴⁸ In the ensuing years he rearticulated his agenda on several occasions. Some of those rearticulations were gathered

⁴⁸Ibid.

in 1994 in the book *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions*. First, he suggests a declericalizing of theology. Christianity must come out of the established church to engage the culture on every level. He asserts that theology must engage the public sector of life through the work of laymen and women.⁴⁹

Second, he suggests the need for the recovery of an apocalyptic teaching of the New Testament. That is, what has been hidden in the privatization of religion must now be revealed to engage the culture and give a hope not only for the individual but also for the world. It is in that realization Christians understand the hope of the future is not in the hands of people with their abilities. That hope rests in the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the holy city.⁵⁰

Third, Newbiggin asserts that there is a need for a doctrine of freedom that rests on the gospel. It is the difference between pretending that we have the truth (an Enlightenment illusion) and witnessing to the truth. Witnessing to the truth engages other witnesses in the form of dialogue based on the shared belief that there is obtainable truth.⁵¹

Fourth, in order for the West to be converted there needs to be a break from denominationalism, an institutional form of privatized religion. The church needs to act in community and that community is made up of all Christians.⁵²

⁴⁹ Lesslie Newbiggin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 73.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 74.

Fifth, there needs to be an honest critique by Christian others. Western Christianity is laden with Western culture and blinders have formed that must be taken off.

Finally, Newbigin calls for courage. Christians must understand the reality of a spiritual battle that calls for “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” He calls for courage that will stand up in the face of societal opposition and acknowledge belief that cannot be proved as true and is doubted by rational minds but nonetheless it is truth.⁵³

Paul Hiebert

According to Hiebert, missionaries must adopt a holistic approach to culture and theology that creates an encounter of the gospel with the culture. The objective, thus, is to seek an interpretation of the gospel via a cultural conceptual frame of reference. He calls this critical contextualization and develops the idea around the notion that previous attempts at contextualization failed and resulted in syncretism or split-level Christianity. Critical contextualization is a method that neither uncritically accepts cultural practices nor denies the validity of the practices, but deals with the practices critically and constructively. Critical contextualization involves four steps: phenomenological analysis, ontological critique, evaluative response and transformative ministries.⁵⁴

The first step of critical contextualization is a phenomenological analysis of the culture. The objective in the first step is not to judge the culture, but rather to understand the culture by participant-observations of people in their context. After making observations,

⁵³ Ibid., 78.

⁵⁴ Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

the participant-observer attempts to understand the culture through an emic position and analyzes it from an etic position.

The second step is an ontological critique that tests the truth claims of the culture. This is a necessary step in order to assure a critical versus relative response to the culture. Hiebert suggests two such tests: Scripture and objective reality. The Scripture test examines the truth claims of the culture in light biblical teaching by employing systematic and biblical theology. Reality testing presumes that all people use empirical verification on their ideas. Based on observations, rational deduction and independent verification, reality testing pushes people to look at their understanding of reality as well as others' understanding.

The third step is developing an evaluative response to the existing beliefs in light of their new biblical understanding. This response should be developed in community as opposed to being imposed upon the community. At this point the existing beliefs will be accepted, rejected or reformulated to give them Christian meaning. The final step in critical contextualization is to develop transformative ministries to help people move from existing beliefs to new beliefs.

Synthesis of Newbigin and Hiebert

Just as Bulatao saw a two-tier Christianity in churches planted among traditional religionists so there appears to be a two-tier Christianity in Europe. Newbigin clearly saw the need for the church to engage the culture and offer an alternative response to the resurgence of paganism. He also saw that the inability for the church to have a voice lies in its surrender to modernity. In utilizing Hiebert's critical contextualization, the church

must critique its involvement with modernity and look at how it can respond to the criticism of paganism.

Given that 56% of young Europeans see the environment, pollution and global warming as their chief concerns,⁵⁵ Christianity must present a holistic view of the gospel by incorporating the goodness of creation and the goodness of man created in the image of God. This suggests that a greater emphasis should be placed on the creation story in our evangelism. In particular, emphasis should be placed on God's involvement with creation. God's care for man and the rest of creation suggests the need for man not only to care about his relationship with God, but also for his creation. This suggests a recovery of a biblical ecology.

Along the same vein, Christianity must recover a biblical understanding of the equality of humanity. Man and woman were both created in the image of God. While there are unique differences between them there is equal dignity. The differences should be celebrated as expressions of God's creation as well as complementary rather than of the dominance of one over the other. Similarly, a deeper understanding of God, not as a male authority figure, but rather as the loving Creator who perfectly exhibits the love and care of a father as much as a mother.

Since 35% of the Europeans polled in the 1998 ISSP on religion have little or no confidence in church or religious organizations, Christianity needs to exhibit a communitarian, rather than a denominational, perspective of the church. Similarly, 45% attend church less than once a year or never, compared to 17% who attended once a week or

⁵⁵“Generation Europe,” *Time Europe*, available from www.time.com/time/europe/generatione.

more and 62% never take part in religious activities outside of attending services. This indicates that Christianity must come out of the church and into the community. The old dichotomy of sacred and secular cannot stand in contemporary Europe.

As Newbigin suggests, theology must come out of the hands of the clerics and into the hands of the laity. Hiebert would suggest that theologizing should be conducted corporately. While there is a need for skilled theologians there is an equal need for theologians to listen to the laity as they express their concerns. Theology, then, must be engaging these concerns at the lay level. Thus, theology must not only relate cognitively, but also affectively.

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