

I. Introduction

A. 30 years ago, some Americans began to realize that Christendom was fading. The mission field was no longer overseas, it was coming home. We are not as secular as Europe – and may never get there: 1) there are still some country club churches in this country – i.e., churches people attend because there are social benefits; 2) some people are still interested in attending Christmas Eve candlelight services or other Christian cultural events – i.e. have their wedding in a church, celebrate first communion, etc.; 3) and it is still possible to start a church in the most secular cities in the US (Boston, SF, etc.) without doing any evangelism. However, the culture is changing rapidly. (Every five years the culture changes in ways we cannot image). Consider this:

1. Gen Z (under 21) has 3-4x more atheists than any previous generation.
2. 65% - 80% of all-American churches are in decline.

B. Most US churches are waiting for people to show up for their great programs.

1. Many Christians today are trained to share Gospel with those who have religious beliefs – i.e., who believe that: 1) there is a god; 2) there is moral truth, 3) people believe in sin and experience guilt; and 4) they believe in an afterlife.
2. In this setting you hold a rally so you can turn religious beliefs into Christian beliefs. “You believe in God, right. And you believe you should be good, right? But you are not good enough. So you should turn to Jesus.”
3. This kind of evangelism doesn’t take long. You just connect the dots. But the religious dots are going away. They do not believe in God, sin, moral absolutes, etc.

C. But the cultural pressure to go to church has fallen away. In the near future it is likely that no one will feel social pressure to attend church.

D. Leslie Newbigen was the first to start asking, “How do we have a missionary encounter in a Western culture?”:

E. Keller believes there are five things we must do in North America if we are going to have a missionary encounter with Western Culture: 1) A Christian high theory and apologetic; 2) a truly Post Christendom Evangelism dynamic; 3) a category defining Christian social project; 4) a Counter catechism; and 5) Grace to the point

II. A Christian High-Theory Apologetic

A. When we think apologetics, we think evidence for the resurrection or reasons to trust Bible. But if you go to Origen, Tertullian, Augustine – what you find is that they critiqued the culture. Before you explain the Gospel to the culture, you need to critique the culture with the Gospel. The greatest apologetic work in history is *City of God*. Augustine critiqued culture. This is called “high theory.”

B. We need to say, “you say you are rational, but you are not.”

C. A recent book that does this is *Why Liberalism Failed*, by Patrick Nedeem, a Roman Catholic academic. He notes that everyone wants freedom. But our modern understanding of freedom is different from historic understanding. It used to be, you are free to do what you should. Now it is, you are free to do whatever you want.

1. Modern cultures have dis-embedded the individual from reason. For instance, many now believe that it doesn't matter what your body says, it's what you feel. What you feel matters more than anything. Freedom used to mean freedom to serve your family, now you can tell them to leave you alone.
- D. Modern freedom means five things – that DO NOT WORK.
 1. All values are relative. Thirty years ago, professors were free to have sex with students, and to challenge this was to be a prude. Now it's considered wrong. The point is, in twenty years it may be OK again. Cultural norms keep changing.
 2. All relationships are transactional. The birth rate is dropping b/c we tend to stay in relationships as long as they benefit us. It's a transaction, just like with a vendor, who you stop using if it isn't to your liking. But you can't divorce 3 year old, so people are not having children.
 3. All identities are hyper fragile; The modern self is buffered – according to Charles Taylor. We do not feel the pull of things outside us. Our feelings are more important. I validate myself. But we can't really live that way. We end up fragile and we need constant affirmation today.
 - a) In a traditional culture, your parents told you what to do. This could be hard, but if you did it you were good. In our culture it hard to succeed and we need ongoing validation.
 4. ??
 5. ??.

III. Truly Post Christian Evangelism Dynamic

- A. In the early church you couldn't bring people to church because church was illegal and undercover and it was dangerous to let others know you went. They might turn you in. Evangelism was done in day-to-day life by all Christ-followers.
- B. In Michael Green's book – *Evangelism in the Early Church* – he notes that 80/90 % of evangelism happened outside church. It was lay people talking to neighbors. Most Christians talk about their faith
- C. Future of evangelism in NA is not in programs, it is missionally engaging the rank and file. You are going to have to talk to people closest to you. Stop hiding. If Christ is at the center of your life then in order to not talk about it you have to hide who you are.
- D. Unless you have kicked Christ to the suburbs of your life, and not let him live downtown
- E. Christians in early church did three things
 1. Got attention
 2. How do we get conviction?
 3. How do we get people attracted.
- F. What do you say?
- G. How do we get conviction?
 1. Christianity is a suit of clothes that are too big for us. We need to grow into them.
 2. But all non Christian beliefs are like a suit too small. It pinches and it might rip.

- a) We were built to know and love God and everything else is too small
 - 3. How do we make this clear?
 - a) Justice
 - b) Freedom
 - c) Identity – Allen Noble, Disruptive Witness, he talks about existential justification. Harold Abrahams, When gun goes off, I have ten seconds. I want to go the distance, then I will know that I am not a bum. Everyone is looking for someone to affirm them. Why are we built to need that, when you cannot get it. We were built for it We need an identity that is received not achieved. Only one master that will not enslave you.
 - d) Beauty
 - 4. None of these work for them. You have to wait for something to go wrong.
- H. Truly post-Christendom evangelistic dynamic
- 1. Christendom society that produces a steady stream of people who feel they should go to church
 - a) Drucker was asked where he went to church before he could get a loan
 - b) Post Christendom = social cost to be a Christian
 - 2. Do not have dots in post-Christendom
 - a) So what do we do? How do we get attention of post Christian society
 - b) How do we get conviction?
 - (1) How do you show people who do not think they are sinners that they need X. We think evangelism is answering p's questions. But before we do that we need to question people's answers. B/c all p have to operate their lives on certain answers to their questions,
 - (a) Where do you get freedom/
 - (b) What do you do to work for justice
 - (c) Where do you find meaning
 - c) So how do you share Gospel with p who do not believe in sin. Jonah 2:9 is Gospel. However, you speak Gospel into culture it has two moves
 - (1) Bad news: you are trying to save yourself in some way and you can't
 - (2) You can be saved.
 - d) Average person today doesn't say the meaning of life is to be a good person, but it's to be free to be myself.
 - (1) What does Gospel look like there? You say, OK, meaning of life is to be free, but you are not. You don't feel free. David Foster Wallace says we all have to live for something. But whatever it is becomes like a god and it will drive you into the ground.
 - (2) But I have to be free to be myself. Which means, I have

- e) Two moves look different depending on their meaning of life
- 3. How do we get traction?
- 4. People say lets go back to Book of Acts. You can do that too much,. But here it works. People do not show up at events. But in 1st century they shared faith. Missional living by ordinary Christians. It is going to get done by ordinary people.
- I. Category Defining Social Encounter
 - 1. Why did early church do so well? Xns were persecuted more than anyone else. How did they grow?
 - 2. One appeal was community – five marks
 - a) Most multiethnic and most multiracial of all
 - b) They cared for the poor
 - c) They were non-retaliatory – in shame culture they forgave others.
 - d) They were against abortion and infanticide
 - (1) They were comprehensively pro-life
 - (2) Children not below adults
 - e) Sexual counter culture – which led to the first sexual revolution.
 - (1) Sex was an appetite and men could have sex with whoever they wanted to. Sex could be forced on anyone of a lower social culture
 - (2) They said sex was not for self-gratification but for self giving. And you have to give your whole sex to the other person and it was radically self-giving
 - (3) I Cor. 7 was radical!
 - (4) Men and women had unreproducible excellencies
 - (5) Xn sex ethic was tied to union with God – who merged with someone different than himself
 - 3. First two of the five sounds like liberals, last two sound conservative and middle doesn't sound like anyone
 - 4. It was neither blue or red. You have to challenge people and culture. If you drop any of these you are simply making church like world.
- J. Counter Catechesis
 - 1. Not here to make a case for catechisms, though he likes them.
 - 2. It was a traditional approach
 - 3. During Reformation there was an explosion of new catechisms. Great. But when you get to stuff on deity of Christ and trinity, they are short. But on sacraments and justification by faith go on and on and on. Why – they are counter catechism. They are deconstructing everything.
 - 4. Protestant catechisms were designed to deconstruct RC. We need to deconstruct our modern culture
 - 5. Jesus does this in Sermon on the Mount. “You heard it said...”
 - 6. Young people are being catechized by social media for four hours per day.
 - a) Be true to yourself
 - b) Be free

- c) Do whatever makes you happy
 - d) No one has the right to tell you what is right and wrong for you.
- 7. Identify it / make it visible, affirm part of it / not be totally negative, then subvert it and then show them how in Christ you get what you are really after
- K. Grace to the Point
 - 1. The rest of the stuff is not going to work if we lose our grasp on grace, b/c we go after power and control and the world rejects that
 - 2. Read Langdon Gilkie – Shantung Compound
 - a) He saw doctrine of sin
 - b) My hearing him gave me a heart wound, and I saw that