

What Does World Christianity Mean for Your Church?

Peter Choi, Calvin Symposium on Worship, Workshop C2

1. The Gospel and Culture: Excerpts from Andrew Walls

1. Definition of culture: *Let us begin with a visit to the theatre. It is a crowded theatre, with a huge stage, and a stream of actors passing across it. Everyone in the packed auditorium can see the stage, but **no one sees the whole of it**. People seated in one place cannot see the entrances left, though they can hear the actor's voice as he enters from the wings. Seated somewhere else, the view is obstructed by a pillar, or an overhanging balcony. Go up into the balcony, and the proscenium arch cuts off the top of the set. As a result, though everyone in the audience sees **the same play and hears the same words**, they have different views of the conjunction of word and action, according to their seat in the theatre ... Culture is simply a name for **a location in the auditorium** where the drama of life is in progress...*

—from “Culture and Conversion in Christian History”

2. The gospel as prisoner of culture: *...if He accepts us “as we are” that implies He does not take us as isolated, self-governing units, because we are not. We are conditioned by **a particular time and place**, by our family and group and society, by “culture” in fact. In Christ God accepts us together with our group relations; with that **cultural conditioning** that makes us feel at home in one part of human society and less at home in another ... He **does not wait to tidy up our ideas** any more than He waits to tidy up our behavior before He accepts us sinners into His family.*

—from “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture”

3. The gospel as liberator of culture: *But throughout Church history there has been another force in tension with this indigenizing principle, and this also is equally of the Gospel. Not only does God in Christ take people as they are: He takes them **in order to transform them** into what He wants them to be. Along with the indigenizing principle which makes his faith a place to feel at home, the Christian inherits **the pilgrim principle**, which whispers to him that he has no abiding city and warns him that to be faithful to Christ will put him **out of step with his society**; for that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system.*

—from “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture”

2. From Africa to China

1. The Three Selves: self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating
2. Africa: Henry Venn (1796-1873) to Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809-91)
3. China: TSRM to TSPM

3. Korea

1. Chesa → Pumo-nim ki'il kinyom-sik sunsyo (1934)
2. Pumo-nim ki'il kinyom-sik sunsyo → Pumo-nim ki'il kinyom-sik yemun (1939)
3. Pumo-nim ki'il kinyom-sik yemun → Pumo-nim ch'udo-sik yemun, 9 parts (1973)
4. 10 parts, addition of a sermon (1977)
5. Pumo-nim ch'udo-sik yemun Pumo-nim ch'umo-sik yemun (2002)

4. Translation

1. שׁוּב: to return
2. חַטָּא: to feel remorse
3. μετανοέω: to change one's mind
4. poenitentiam agite (Latin, 4th c): to do penance
5. resipiscite (Latin, 16th c): to be penitent

5. Lessons for the Church Today