

Samuel Escobar: As I cross the city of Lima, I feel strengthened by the Lord, who says, "Don't be afraid. There are many troubles, but I have many people in this city."

Narrator: The Lord God says through Isaiah, "If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, you will be called repairer of broken walls, restorer of streets with dwellings." Let us work together in word and deed to proclaim Christ in the urban world until he comes.

Røy Bakke: The Bible may begin in a garden but it ends in a city. What kind of a city is God building? Isaiah gives us a record. It's going to be a city with a housing policy, and a city where children do not die young—that's a public health policy! That's God's agenda, and he's building a city right now. We couldn't honor him more, I suspect, than by loving him and by beginning to love the city. We've got an urban future whether we like it or not.

The Impact of Modernization

Os Guinness

I would like to discuss two theories, and some of their consequences, which are of the utmost gravity to missions.

The first theory is that modernity, or the emerging world civilization which is now being produced by the forces of modernization, represents the single greatest opportunity and the single greatest threat the church of Christ has faced since apostolic times. The second theory is that for most evangelicals worldwide this challenge is unconflicted.

One of my most prized possessions is a little bronze medallion. It was struck in 1900 to celebrate the liberation of Peking by the Boxers. What's fascinating is the symbolism on the medallion. On one side is the Heavenly Gate belching smoke and flames. The Boxers had set the Heavenly Gate on fire as a deliberate political statement. The regime, the Manchu dynasty, had lost the mandate of heaven and they were announcing it to the world. But those who struck the medallion put on the other side other symbols of the same point—the loss of the mandate of heaven. Above was the word, *Ichobod*, "the glory has gone," and underneath the Chaldean words *mene, mene, tekel parsin*, "weighed in the balances and found wanting." That is a rather hypocritical Western observation on the fall of the Manchu regime.

The reason it is so interesting and moving to me is because my grandfather was there and lived through it. It is also interesting the way various commentators have looked at that period and tried to see significance for the world in the twentieth century. At the time, most of them looked at the contrast between modernity and the corrupt ancient regime, the new and the old, the advanced and the backward, and so on. They said the loss of the mandate of heaven showed this would be the American century, or the Christian century.

But at the same time, there were those who looked at the same thing and saw not the contrast between modernity and China, but the similarities. They saw that just as the Chinese regime lost its mandate of heaven under this first impact of modernity, so did Europe and the United States, although they gave it a different name.

Marx looked at modernity and remarked that all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy will one day be profaned. Nietzsche looked across from Germany to England and said that when cultures lose the decisive influence of God, God dies. When God dies for

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a culture, they become weightless; there is a hollowing out. They lose the reality that gives them greatness and staying power, and their energy drains from the inside.

Nietzsche called himself the Anti-Christ. He hated Christ and he hated Christianity. But his understanding was actually profoundly biblical. His word *weightlessness* is precisely the opposite of the biblical word *glory*, and the deepest meaning of *glory* is not “radiance,” but “reality.” God alone has gravity and reality, and all that’s distanced from God slowly loses them both. Idols are nothing—fictions, empty nothings. When cultures fall away from God, they too become weightless.

A hundred and fifty years later we can see Marx was generally wrong, but on that point he was right. A hundred years after Nietzsche, we can see the awful results of what he taught, but on that point he was right. If you look at what modernity has done to religion in general, to the gospel in particular, and to the church in the modernized parts of the world, you perhaps can see it as possibly the greatest threat the church has faced since apostolic times.

Think for a moment of the way modernity encircles individuals. And now it is encircling the globe. First, transcendence is cut off. Second, tradition is closed off. Third, the sense of totality and integration of faith in the whole of life is cramped and confined. And finally, even truth itself is corrupted into shallow sentiment.

We can see this in various situations. Consider any of the religions in the modern world. As yet, no great historic religion has flourished under the conditions of advanced modernity. If we examine the Christian church over 2000 years, we see the challenges of the seduction of gnosticism. Modernity is just as seductive as any gnosticism.

We can see similar challenges in the past in Nero and the Diocletians, and in the Oakland Repression. More people have died in the twentieth century, and more Christians in particular, than in any other century in human history. We can also look at modernity in terms of the Reformation. Protestants have long seen the contrast of the Reformation and what occurred before. But as we meet as Protestant evangelists in the 1980s, let us remember that today the prototypical charlatan in the modern world is no longer the medieval priest. We acknowledge with tears, it is the modern evangelist.

Looking towards the past, at the beginning of the twentieth century didn’t they claim the evangelization of the world would be within this generation? A rallying cry, yes; reality, no. The impact of modernity on that movement knocked it off course.

Will we do better? Only if we look at the challenge of modernity straight in the eyes and overcome it by the power of Christ. We are on the threshold of winning the world at a time when the world has called into question what it means to reach anyone. And yet, as evangelicals, we could quite literally win the world and lose our own souls, and in some cases that has already happened.

The Three Revolutions

We need to define *modernization*. Many people incorrectly use it just as a fancy word for change and development. Others improperly use it as a word to describe new philosophical attacks.

Modernity or modernization is the result of three great revolutions in human experience: the oldest goes back to the fifteenth century—the capitalist revolution; the most important goes back to the late eighteenth century in England and France—the industrial, or technological revolution; and the third, and by far the least important, occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the ideological revolutions.

Another way of saying it is that modernity is the result of a whole constellation of forces working together. The capitalist economy, the modern centralized bureaucratic

state, the new industrial technology going everywhere, rapid population growth, the mass media, and globalization. Their tentacles reach to the farthest corners of the world.

Of course, modernity doesn’t reach everywhere yet, so much of what I’m saying will not apply to some parts of the world. Different cultures with different values and different value systems refract the growth of modernity and development in different ways. There are great differences between England, the first to be industrialized, and the United States; and between the United States and Japan; and between Japan and a newly industrialized country such as Singapore. There are great differences but also enormous similarities—and tremendous challenges to the gospel.

There are some reminders, or checkpoints, concerning having missions in the modern world without having worldliness in modern missions. Our theme is the whole gospel by the whole church to the whole world. Sounds terrific, doesn’t it? And it sounds easier with modernity. After all, with the modern information explosion, with modern technology, with media that are decentralized, that are cheap, that are accessible, more can be known and it can be known better and faster than ever before. That is a very misleading impression. It gives you the impression that the only problem lies between the *knows* and the *know-nots*. But that isn’t the problem of modernity; the problem is much deeper. The media themselves have a message and there is a lag between information and comprehension, which is called the “meaning gap.”

Unknowing and All Knowing

Modern overload of information leads to a state of unknowing. In many modernized parts of the world, the mentality is, “Happiness is a small circle.” We want to know as little as we need, care as little as we can, and get by with it. Advertizing, television, and pop-culture have made a great shift in the way people experience life and understand the world. They shift from words to images, from action to spectacles, from exposition to entertainment, from truth to feeling. They shift from conviction to superficial sentiment. We see it in the church, and even, dare I say, here this week.

People can live in the midst of an explosion of information and know everything about the last twenty-four hours, and next to nothing about the last twenty-four years; all about the immediate, and nothing about the ultimate. Facts without a framework leads to knowledge without obedience, knowledge without wisdom, knowledge without action. At the same time, modernity leads in another direction, towards the state of “all knowing.” In other words, the result of the modern explosion, the knowledge explosion, is that we now create a new class of people whose whole life and work is centered around ideas and symbols and information. This in turn has created a new mentality towards information—the ideal of instant total information. As Kant stated, we need to know in order to predict, in order to control. Know everything, predict everything, and control everything.

But if the state of unknowing before the Lord is irresponsible, this illusion of all knowing is a form of idolatry. The idea that we can rely on information to do all these things today has a thousand illusions built into it. It creates a professionalized, specialized class of people in every area: law, academia, missions. And certain common features appear across the world in this class. Expert knowledge begins to be pursued as an end in itself. Experts, understood only by other experts, talk more and more only with other experts. Expertise and professionalism cut experts off from ordinary people and creates a dependency of ordinary people on them—the new paternalism. And finally, it creates experts who live in their own worlds from consultation to congress, and don’t touch ordinary reality. That’s not an attack on what we’re doing, but people fit into

it, without thinking, and have fallen for it.

There are two dangers in living with modernity. The old fear was that modernity was against religion altogether. Actually, modernity is hostile only to religions that believe in transcendence and truth; and therefore it is hostile to the gospel.

The modern world creates a great chasm between the private world and the public world. The private world of home and clubs and associations and family and church, and the public world of work and government and Honda and Mitsubishi and the Pentagon and Whitehall, and so on. But religion only flourishes in the private world. Is that the Lordship of Christ?

The founder and first chairman of McDonald's was an evangelical. Before he died, he was interviewed by the *New York Times*. They asked him what he believed in. He said, "I believe in God, the family, and McDonald's. And when I get to the office, I reverse the order." I trust he was joking—the paper didn't say. But every day millions of modern Christians do what he was saying without realizing it. They say Christ is Lord of everything, but they live a part-time, compartmentalized faith.

Another danger is pluralization. Choice and change are the heart of modernity and they profoundly affect faith in many ways—commitment, for example. The increase in choice and change leads to a decrease in commitment, continuity, and conviction. We live in a supermarket—it's pick and choose. And the result in the modern church is a dilettantism and shallowness in terms of old doctrinal commitments. This produces apathy. The gospel flourishes when it's either-or, life or death, darkness or light. But in the modern world the very extension of choice leads to an evasion of choice. There's always another option.

Worst of all, pluralization is touching conversion. As Dr. Packer said last night, conversion is revolutionary because it's total, radical, lasting. But in the modern world, there are people who have been converted fifteen times in the last ten years! They're converted and reconverted and reconverted, or in Christian terms, born again and again and again. But that isn't funny. Even being born again in the conditions of modernized suburbia has become a shallow, sentimental experience that's no longer radical and life changing.

Yet modernity is an ideal reinforcement for two types of religion. First, modernity reinforces a generalized syncretism. Think of the shift back to state Shinto in Japan which replaced post-war democratic values. Think of the way that Europe is not so much post-Christian as pre-Christian. Think of the growth, even in the scientific West, of the New Age movement, or the semi-religious beliefs in environmentalism, feminism, and so on. The modernized world is an ideal breeding ground for syncretism.

And secondly, it is a reinforcement for a generalized secularism—a secular indifference to any religion or faith. It's not so much that religion is untrue, but that religion is utterly irrelevant to modern, secularized people.

All of our contact with any culture is in answer to two questions: How we view that culture and how we view the theology behind our approach. As the church engages extraordinarily powerful cultures, it has been most penetrating when two principles are characterized.

Christ Over All; Christ Against All

The first is the protagonist principle—Christ over all, and the key word is *all*. Modernity shatters that word *all*. We may say it, we may sing it, but we don't live it. The integration of faith needs to be with the whole of life: people witnessing at work, thinking creatively, consistently, coherently about everything they do—not only in the private

world but the public world. As the great Dutch leader, Abraham Kuyper, said, there is not an inch of any sphere of life over which Christ the Lord does not say, "Mine." And that is what modernity makes so difficult.

The second principle is the antagonist principle—Christ over all, against all that will not obey him. Here the key word is *tension*. As we follow his Lordship, we are *in*, but we are not *of*. Faithful to him, we're foreign in the world. We are not conformed, we are transformed. The church in the modern world is so accommodating that there is almost no intellectual or social-critical tension left to challenge the cultures profoundly.

In the early seventies at Oxford, one of my professors who was an atheist said that by the end of the seventies in America the worldliest Christians would be the fundamentalists. That was hard to imagine because fundamentalism is world denying by definition. But by the late 1980s, that's the most obvious thing to anyone looking at the scene. Fundamentalism is more worldly in many of its applications, in its use of television, and a hundred other things, than the worldliest liberal you could ever discover.

I'm not against the modern world. I'm very grateful to live in the modern world. But more than that, the modern world represents extraordinary opportunities. What the Greek and the Roman roads were in the first century, what the printing presses and the sailing ships were at the time of the Reformation, modernity represents to us.

Modernity prompts cultural openness. It comes to traditional societies and shatters them and leaves them open. We all know the opportunities for God in societies and classes that have been dislocated from their old ways. When they're dislocated or economically oppressed, they're open. And we know from the early nineteenth century down to the movements of today, what an extraordinary thing it means to see traditional societies which were deeply closed opened up.

Not only that, totalitarianism is challenged to be more open. Totalitarianism, in a way, is the totalitarian enterprise of reconstituting the traditional world in the modern form, with the modern state, with the modern bureaucracy, with the modern technology, all under the party. But even totalitarianism is not immune to the decentralizing forces of modernization. And when we see the struggles in China and the Soviet Union, we realize it's not American ideas, democratic ideas, that have done it. Those who think that flatter themselves. It's modernity.

There are Big Macs in the world of Big Brother. Raisa Gorbachev uses American Express in Red Square. And it's not the writings of Thomas Jefferson. Modernity is the greatest opener of closed societies in history—which also means openness for the gospel.

If we look at Scripture, we see the dynamic of sin is that it always produces ironic results. Sin is never stable. It's the truth held in unrighteousness and it can never be stable. Modernity accelerates this tremendously. The ironies are all around us. For example, modern cities make people closer and lonelier and more alienated all at the same time. Modern lifestyles offer a do-it-yourself freedom that follows fad slavishly and ends in addictions. Modern consumer goods bring happiness closer and take joy further away. Anyone who knows our modern world knows that everywhere it is strewn with ironies, and each one is a "pigsty moment" in which prodigals come to the truth. Modernity destroys its own unbeliefs faster than anything in history.

Overcoming Modernity

There are two points of reliance in overcoming modernity. The first is our part, the second the Lord's. In terms of our part: prayer and fasting. This doesn't come naturally

to me—I'd much rather speak on something else. The modern world has reduced fasting to a technique—a form of political or weight control. But we need to see what *Jesus* means by prayer and fasting. When the physical and spiritual are brought together with the purpose of being in touch with spiritual warfare, we see a repudiation of modernity at the heart of its grand lie. Modernity is the greatest example history has ever seen of “by bread alone”—by sex alone, by work alone, by money alone. “By bread alone” is written across modernity. We can see where Adam failed. He did not obey, he broke his fast and he ate. Our Lord sustained both his fast and his obedience, refused to accept the Devil's temptation, and overcame.

The second point of reliance in overcoming modernity is by the Word and the Spirit. Modernity is a world without windows. We live in a world where there's no way to break out because there's nothing left in modern philosophy to break in. The answer is the Word. While traveling around evangelicalism, I hear the cry of the poor, the cry of the dying, the cry of the imprisoned. And I hear the cry of a gasping Word because of evangelicals who say they believe it doesn't belong in preaching. In America, for instance: I know of no country in the world where the churches are so full and the sermons, by and large, are so empty. The loss of transcendence in preaching is horrifying. You can see this shift from Lausanne '74 to Manila '89 in the difference in styles of utterance. That's why Marxism declined. Why is the gospel different from Marxism? Marxism had no transcendental point of critique and could never be renewed. We have, however, the Word which breaks in.

It is my prayer that we will put modernity on our agenda for mission. And that we will analyze its impact at our local levels in our countries, our cities, our audiences, our ministries. And I pray that we will seek to reform the church where the impact of modernity has already been damaging. For example, the loss of truth; sweatless, long-distance evangelism without incarnation; technique without spiritual warfare; a reliance on images until they are coming out of our ears without a trust in the power of words in general, and the Word in particular. I pray we will also abandon our easy excuses.

We need to recover the only reality which will overcome modernity. What's the answer to Nietzsche's philosophy that when God dies for a culture they become weightless? The answer is the glory of God. The answer to Nietzsche is in Moses, in Exodus 33 when he faced the great crisis of his life, with problems all around him. He turned to the Lord and his deepest prayer was, “Lord show me your glory.” He wanted all of God that a human being could behold because only that could see him through the problems that he faced.

Do we think we can win the world by A.D. 2000? Or are we overwhelmed by the thought of the task of winning the world at all? We need to face the world and then deliberately turn away and look to the Lord, the source of the only reality stronger than modernity—the only one with power able to overcome the colossus we face. Lord, show us your glory!

SOCIAL CONCERN AND EVANGELISM I

Social Concern and Evangelization

Vinay Samuel

Several participants have asked me to explain the difference between the two plenary themes of “Good News to the Poor” and “Social Concern and Evangelization.” A clue is found in the table of contents of the electives offered at the Congress. “Good News to the Poor” is placed in the section on “The Whole World,” which focuses on the poor as a group to be reached with the gospel. “Social Concern and Evangelization” is included in the section on “The Whole Gospel” and invites us to explore the meaning of the whole gospel.

Their selection reflects the assumptions of the Lausanne Covenant that: (a) faithfulness to the gospel includes a call to respond to the needs of the whole person and to all human needs; and (b) it is in this context of responding to the whole person that the whole gospel is uncovered and articulated.

Lausanne I affirmed the commitment of evangelicals to the whole gospel. It facilitated a worldwide movement of evangelicals willing to be shaped by the whole gospel, and willing to pay the price of living it out and being eager to share it. Despite some failure, they discovered its effectiveness. Their witness has been shared at this Congress.

We saw the moving and powerful video *The Challenge Before Us*. Luis Bush told the inspiring story of a servant of God who works in the dump city on the edge of Manila. Afterwards, the person sitting next to me remarked, “The problems are so overwhelming. Can we do anything?” Someone else asked, “Does such response to human need really work?”

I would like to present a humble response to such feelings and fears—the response of people who refuse to give up in spite of being overwhelmed by the greatness of the need. They persevered and found Christ empowering them. They looked at the people around them through the eyes of Jesus and sought to respond to their needs in his way. We will hear first from Joni Eareckson Tada, who works with disabled people in the United States: