I. Introduction to Global Christianity:

Initial issue: Come to grips with the underlying emotions associated with America and the western church’s place and past actions in the world before we can truly understand the history of Global Christianity.

II. Problems which limit a clear and honest examination of Global Christianity:

A. Reflexivity – the tendency of etic researchers to be blinded by three types of biases when studying another culture:

1. Influence of the social origin of the researcher
2. Influence of the researcher’s academic position and its impact relative to positions of power.
3. Influence of intellectualist biases that can cause the researcher to miss the logic of indigenous practices by collapsing them into theoretical logic (Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 39).

B. Cultural bias – this is not an overt ethnocentrism, but rather is latent. It is the natural tendency to prefer our worldview and ways of thinking (rationalism, individualism, materialism), our histories, and religious and social priorities. This is what we are most comfortable with, so being forced to see things from a different perspective can be uncomfortable.

C. Nationalism and colonialis mindset – our place in the world as a dominant power and the history of the U.S. and western Christianity’s past alliances between the church’s missionary efforts and national attempts at colonization can lead to guilt, denial, anger, defensiveness, superiority.

1. Guilt – tendency to feel shame about the way that the U.S. and the church have behaved in the world when we look at our past actions.
   
a) The goal of this class: to move beyond the guilt and self-blame to prevent it from crippling action in the present. How should we act now in spite of a sometimes misguided past?
   
b) Need: To avoid inaction for fear that we won’t do the right thing, or resentment that our actions will be misunderstood. To approach the world community of Christians and non-Christians with humility and a willingness to learn.

2. Denial – the fact that events occurred in the past and in distant places, and the fact that people in power are able to control what is printed or what is given greatest attention in the media, and the sheer severity of past acts of domination, neglect, or abuse/misuse can cause us to deny
they actually occurred or if they did occur, we can insist that they are being exaggerated.

a) We need to recognize this is an emotional and mental coping mechanism. Similar to Germans’ ways of dealing with the Holocaust and Americans’ ways of dealing with the treatment of Blacks/slaves – we seek to find ways to minimize the pain and guilt of realization, especially in an individualistic society.

3. Distancing – we seek ways to move the reality of past inequities and misuse of power by the church and western governments far away from us (“I” didn’t do this, so why do I have to deal with it?”; “We’ve already talked about this a lot, get over it!”; feelings that victims are attempting to manipulate those in power with guilt.)

4. Paternalism – an unintended and well-meant tendency to dominate by deciding we know what is best for other Christians in the world. In this case, there is a willingness to serve and to care for other Christians, but only as long as it is done on our terms, according to our assessments of the circumstances, and as long as we maintain control of how care is given.

III. Theoretical Approaches to the Examination of Global Christianity

A. The task of theology from a 2/3 world perspective – to discover the purposes of God, read the signs of the times, and to call the church to obedience (Gonzalez, Mañana 22). All gospel is inculturated.

B. Antecedent to doing theology from a 2/3 world perspective – to recognize the influences of liberalism.

1. Liberalism – primacy of the individual self; conceives of society as a plurality of persons, religious belief precedes participation in a religious community; focus of faith is individual believer, not the community of faith (Goizueta, GDOT, 485).

2. Liberalism views church membership as open and mobile with churches competing in a religious marketplace, making church members consumers (Goizueta, 485).

3. World Christians’ view is opposed to western liberalism – community is the key. For world Christians – the starting point of pluralism is the local believer and the crucified Jesus, not the autonomous self, or emphasis on choices in a religious marketplace.

C. Liberation Theologies – theologies about God grounded in the life of Christian discipleship in solidarity with the poor (Stam, 486). These theologies have arisen in the context of 2/3 world settings to cope with circumstances of inequity and dominance (Theorists: Gustavo Gutierrez – Latin America; Minjung theology – Korea; James Cone – Black Liberation theology).
1. Context for the rise of Latin American liberation theologies:
   a) Post Vatican II and Medellin Council of 1968 (Stam 486)
   b) Influence of Protestant theology of hope’s emphasis on eschatology and exodus from bondage (Stam 486)
   c) Emergence of ecclesial base communities, population explosion, and scarcity of priests leading to mobilized laity in poor Latin American neighborhoods.
   d) Reaction to negative effects of developmentalism – economic and power inequities that arose in Latin American countries where the profits went to foreign companies and managerial elites (Stam 487)

2. Goal of liberation theologies – to relate faith to life and practice in context of specific social realities (Stam 487). Liberation theology seeks to restore theory and practice as two sides of truth.

3. The challenges of using liberation theologies to examine global Christianity:
   a) Challenge #1 – to distinguish between Marxist ideologies which influenced their development and the validity of the power struggles which they disclose.

   (1) Pt.: We should not reject them as valid rubrics for examining Global Christianity even though underlying Marxism was originally used in atheistic contexts. We don’t have to accept atheistic premises, but if the discussion about power is true, we should be willing to accept it.

   b) Challenge #2 – the acceptance of the premises of many liberation theologies will force us continually to deal with our emotions and to choose humility, transparency, and surrender the need to control.

   (1) Pt.: Because there is a long legacy of the dominance of the western church, in order to see a different perspective, we will have to constantly recognize the underlying emotions which may color our examination of this topic.

D. Approaches to the intersection of indigenous religions and culture with Christianity:

1. Inculturation - in a general sense, means the process by which a person is socialized into his/her own culture. With regard to the transmission of
the Christian message, inculturation is the process of adapting Christian practices to a given culture. Inculturation arose in Roman Catholic missiology and was viewed as the process by which the church becomes inserted in a given culture in a transformative way (Gener 192).

2. Acculturation – in a general sense, involves the process of socialization into a host or dominant culture. With regard to Christianity, it involves adapting indigenous religious practices to the host culture as well as influences upon the Christian religious practices by the host culture (e.g. converted Africans living in square houses instead of round ones; or the wearing of Chinese clothing by Hudson Taylor). Martinez describes it as the process of adaptation that occurs in the encounter between two or more cultures. The development of Christianity is affected by the culture of the missionary and the receptor culture (Martinez 1).

3. Contextualization – articulating biblical faith using vernacular terms and engaging local issues. (Gener 192)

4. Accommodation – the adaptation of Christian religious practices to indigenous religious views; viewed by some as assimilation or syncretism (the converting of existing temples for Christian use, or native holidays infused with Christian meaning such as Christmas and Easter).

E. Postcolonialism and postcolonial theologies – examines the impact of European colonization on colonized societies, addressing issues of race, gender, identity, globalization, and power issues (Ireland 683). Postcolonialism addresses an entire matrix of thinking of dominant (colonial/imperialist) western culture that has characterized members of 2/3 world cultures using language, literature, history, and cultural media such as art, music, film etc. Rather than recognizing the multivalent and diverse nature of different groups, the colonialist tendency depicts “the other” in stereotypical ways to control them (even when unintentional). Postcolonialist strategies seek to reveal colonialist biases and to deconstruct and reinterpret the marginalized other in ways that recapture their identities. Theorists: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak.

1. Impact of the merger between Christianity and colonialism:
   a) Postcolonial theologians argue that modernism, Christianity, and colonialism were mingled to put Christianity at the service of the colonial agenda (Ireland 683).
   b) Christianity of colonized cultures shaped by European culture that believed in its inherent superiority (Ireland 684).

2. Challenges arising from the use of postcolonialism to examine global Christianity:
Challenge #1 – since many of these theologies arose among minorities in areas previously dominated by western nations, and given our origins from the dominating nations, the issues of guilt, denial, etc. all must be faced.

Challenge #2 – the rubrics by which dominating people stereotype “the other” can lead to blindness. In other words, when we create stereotypes, we may not be able to see those we have stereotyped in any other way and we may even fail to recognize that our views of others are stereotypes. Instead, we think that is really how they are.

Challenge #3 – western scholars who are part of the establishment often denigrate postcolonial and liberation theologies by portraying them as peripheral theories, new, nonrational, or unsubstantiated ideas so we have to distinguish between valid criticisms of certain aspects of postcolonialism and liberation theology and cultural bias which unconsciously uses these strategies to silence dissent and threats to the dominating culture’s views.

F. Biblical Models of Jesus’ Approach to the Poor, to the Ethnic Other, and the Oppressed

Lk 4, Malachi, Haggai, Habakkuk etc. – Kingdom of God, Servant, welcoming community, Good Samaritan, Samaritan Woman.

1. Challenge #1 – western Enlightenment focus on individualism fails to see communal identification of most of 2/3 world.

2. Challenge #2 – the application of biblical metaphor as illustration requires a paradigm shift away from our pragmatic rationalism as the primary way that we think.

3. Challenge #3 – the history of evangelicalism in America has led to a split between the church’s attitudes about its spiritual and social/political obligations. These arenas are not split in the rest of the 2/3 world, but in the U.S. since the early 1900s, social involvement became a “liberal” Christian cause.

4. Challenge #4 – the need for modern contextualization and application. A proper biblical hermeneutic of these concepts requires that we first identify their biblical significance and then extrapolate the transferable principles for a contemporary approach that doesn’t violate the original meaning of the biblical texts.
IV. Core Questions to consider when examining a group and its brand of Christianity:

A. What are the core components of its social foundation? (e.g. tribe, family, nuclear family, bureaucracy)

B. What is the significance of the individual in relation to a larger group?

C. What are its country's present and historical political conditions and how have these shaped the character of religious faith and practices?

D. How do the Christians of this country view the nature and supernatural worlds?

E. How has the Christian faith been shaped by contact with competing religious ideas and groups?

F. What is the attitude of this country’s Christians toward reason?

G. What cultural practices must be renegotiated in order to insure receptivity of the gospel message? (e.g. ancestor worship in China in the Chinese Rites controversy; polygamy in Africa).

V. Jenkins – 1:33 The Next Christendom

A. Global north & south – terms derived from the Brandt Commission in 1980 –
Global north - Europe, North America, Japan; South – countries with less access to wealth and resources (Jenkins 3).

B. By 2050 34% of world population will be Christian with 3 Christians to every 2 Muslims (Jenkins 6).

C. As Christianity moves southward, it will be changed by immersion in the cultures of the southern host societies (Jenkins 7).

D. What will Southern churches look like in this synthesis (acculturation)?

1. Among poorer people
2. Emphasize political liberation combined with deliverance from supernatural evil (7)
3. More conservative in terms of beliefs and moral teachings (8)
4. Roman Catholic churches are traditionalist and fideist; Protestants are evangelical or Pentecostal.
5. Strong supernatural orientation
6. Newer churches preach deep personal faith, communal orthodoxy, mysticism and Puritanism based on scriptural authority (8). Faith-healing, exorcism, and dream-visions part of religious sensibility.
E. Accommodating “northern” churches in America have experienced greatest contractions (decrease) (10)


G. Similar phases of growth in nations of global south (13):
   1. Similar social and theological worldviews
   2. Facing similar issues regarding race, inculturation, and dealing with past colonial heritages
   3. Passion for mission and evangelism to other southern nations (14)

H. Kwame Bediako – “the renewal of a non-Western religion” – Christianity returning to its African roots (Jenkins 19)

I. Myth of western Christianity – distorts pattern of Christianity’s development in east and Africa (20)

J. Eastern Churches – a continuous legacy to the present.
   1. Early theological controversies over the nature of Christ.
      a) Result: Catholic and Orthodox churches held view that Christ had two natures (divine & human) in one person.
      b) Monophysites held that Christ had only one divine nature, but no human nature (primarily view of Coptic Orthodox church) & split from Eastern Orthodoxy in 451 (Council of Chalcedon) (Jenkins 22)
      c) Nestorians split from Eastern Orthodoxy in 431 (in Christ the union of divinity & humanity is moral not natural, so Christ has two natures in two persons united by a common will) (Nestorians were first evangelizers of China, Persia).
   2. East & Western churches divided since Fall of Rome and divided over European (West) and Asian/African (Eastern) models of Christianity (Jenkins 22). Result: Western Christians didn’t acknowledge influence of Eastern Christianity when they began missionary activities in early modern period.
   3. Armenia and Ethiopia maintained Christian influence through Middle Ages and Christians in Muslim nations were allowed to worship their religions as *dhimmi* (protected “people of the Book”) through most of the Middle Ages.
   4. Eastern Christians (Melkites – Orthodox; Jacobite – Monophysite; Nestorians) maintained ancient texts and were source of intellectualism in medieval period (Jenkins 25).
5. Ottoman Turks recognized each Christian denomination as a separate *millet*, a community under its own laws and courts (J 25). Copt – a corruption of the word *Aegyptos*.

6. Nestorian missionaries spread from Persia and Syria in the 7th c. to Central Asia and China following the Silk Route (J 26).

K. How did Christian communities lose their influence in the later Middle Ages?

1. Political events – the conquest of the Mongols eliminated centers of civilizations in the Middle East (Mongol king invaded Muslim areas (Baghdad & Palestine) in mid-13th c. but when Muslims eventually defeated Mongols, their backlashed destroyed Christian states (Crusader states) Jenkins 32.

2. 14th c. Asia struck by plague which led to new regimes which were intolerant and xenophobic (vs. Christians) leading to pogroms against Christians in Muslim countries and nationalist reaction in China (J 32-33). By 16th c – no evidence of Christianity in China.

3. Christian state of Nubia succumbed to Muslims c. 1450 and Ethiopia victim of jihad in early 16th c.

4. In Europe, Christian power also declined under assault from Ottoman Turks in late Middle Ages.

For Further Reading:


