

## “Word, Work & Wonder”

### A Trinitarian view and set of themes in considering the worldwide church and its mission

**Segment A:** April 19-30, 2004

MM Lopez Development Center, Antipolo City, Philippines  
Steve Spaulding, Dawn Ministries Asia-Pacific

*NOTE: the structure of this paper is not clearly linear or scholarly. It is designed in tandem with Powerpoint visuals of a lecture. The views expressed here are those of the author.*

We find ourselves thrust upon an age of post-modern relativization, globalization, urbanization, new millennial angst, new tribalisms, the genuine *clash of civilizations*<sup>i</sup>, waning of the so-called West, marginalization or balkanization of nation-states<sup>ii</sup>, an age of terrorism and counter-terrorism (war and anti-war<sup>iii</sup>); as well as an age of synergy and integration.

What of the church? What is this age we’re living in doing to shape the global church and the so-called “task” of the church?

There are some clear indicators that the church at this turn of the millennium is headed in some specific directions, albeit very many directions if one tries to encompass the whole. But there persist a number of trends that are noteworthy, even instructive, to us.

“Transformation” is on everyone’s lips these days, it seems. We’re all becoming enamored with something that our forebears apparently were not. Or at least we can say this is a relatively fresh/new dominant theme, or governing metaphor.

On the way to ‘transformation,’ regardless of our definitions or specific agenda, we are experiencing, as never before, a broadening of our own particular theological and missiological vistas, due to the nature of the ‘story we find ourselves in’ (to borrow a contemporary popular analysts’ book title).

#### **SLIDE 1: Why Word, Work and Wonder?**

As I understand it, the purpose of placing this paper at the front end of a consultation of the Asia Leadership Institute is that we are seeking to explore some of the salient dimensions of the discipling of our nations, or DNa, Atty. Jun Vencer calls it.

This will mean at least the following for this particular paper:

1. Most of us need to become and are already being habituated to considering in greater depth the contribution of streams within the Christian church which are well beyond the borders of our own. In fact, each of the major streams of the church we consider within the rubric of Word, Work and Wonder has had its own share of major failings both in relation to the essence of the church and mission and in seeking to engage society historically. We need to be aware of these failings in ourselves and our ecclesial

counterparts to at least minimize the repeating of the past and at best to synergize our efforts at more comprehensively discipling our nation(s).

2. I have personally discovered a sometimes bazaar degree of overlap between:
  - a. the major streams/spheres of the global church (Word, Work and Wonder);
  - b. the primary civilizational or cultural archetypes of the human dilemma (best laid out in Roland Muller's *Honor and Shame*, namely Guilt, Shame and Fear cultures);
  - c. three biblical renditions of the core of gospel re-presentation beyond the creedal formulae – pertaining directly to these cultural archetypes: Forgiveness – Justification for the guilty, Reconciliation – Restoration for the shamed, Deliverance – Victory for the fearful;
  - d. the three “All’s” of the Matthean Great Commission;
  - e. the elements which the Western missionary church has largely been without in presenting a particular gospel and church-polity to receiving nations in the rest of the world (Persecution, Poverty and the Powers);
  - f. the three battlefronts of evil (Flesh, World and Devil);
  - g. the members of the Trinity;
  - h. the Pauline triad of faith/hope/love...

and so on. These form the skeletal framework for what I call a trinitarian or three-dimensional or nonpolar paradigm of the church and its task. I make passing reference to both Roland Muller and, much more recently, Christian Schwarz as aids in my development of these connections, but the bulk of this material has been discovered in my own deliberation, Bible study and readings and conversations with scores of church and mission leaders primarily on both sides of the Pacific. Not only is there significant correlation between these triads, but they offer a progression of themes which I believe moves many of the ‘debates’ (which would tend to be, by definition, bipolar – between two poles of a continuum of any particular argument/issue) out onto a less combative and more even-handed playing field, in which third dimensions bring arguments into more substantive engagement with real-life scenarios (and in this post-modern milieu, offer less ‘antithetical’ (read black and white) approaches to issues which do remain life-and-death serious. I have recently been reading Amos Yong’s development of a ‘pneumatological theology of world religions,’ unapologetically in the interests of moving *Beyond the Impasse* (the title of the book) of a Christological approach to world religions which has tended invariably to dead-end into the all-important matter of Christ’s uniqueness. Yong’s approach, I think, is typical of an indefinite future in theological method, in which a kind of post-modern seriousness is brought to the missionary and theological task of the church, not so much an accommodation to the latest and radically relativizing philosophical system as an attempt to move past modernity’s Christian categorical and either/or antithetical approaches to truth. This is also illustrated in the popular work of post-modern enthusiasts such as Brian McLaren, in *A New Kind of Christian*.

### Why Word/Work/Wonder now?

- Ambition to disciple nations fully
- Greater value in/appreciation for other *streams*
- A ‘*trinitarian*’ or *three-dimensional* approach could provide a fuller socio-cultural, ecclesial and missional backdrop for this discussion of discipling nations
- Entertaining a profounder engagement of the church with its creational and societal obligations, or of the ‘Great Commission’ with the ‘Kingdom’ (and Where does the DAWN movement fit within the Great Commission and Kingdom seeking?)
- *Incarnational ecclesiology* in the background

3. Moving beyond the triad-model, the persisting question within the DAWN movement may be centered on ‘what a disciplined nation looks like,’ or, for those nervous with the idea of closure on the concept: ‘what it looks like when we are authentically discipling whole nations?’ This is to say that while in recent years we’ve become increasingly concerned with ‘what type of church’ we’re seeking to multiply at unprecedented rates, we’re still coming back to the central passages and biblical themes which bring intersection between the so-called Great Commission – and with it the faithful planting of the church – AND the grand Kingdom motif of Old and New Testaments. I have sought to explore, at least in introductory fashion, more solid connections between these themes as they might be played out in contemporary mission (certainly not just in the West or Asia, although these and especially Asia are my prime contexts of reference). While we always hope for some assurance that what we are doing is close to the core of the *missio dei*, we have to admit that we all fall prey to reductionisms, especially in regard to our own vested interests. While I have placed the DAWN movement mainly in, say, one of four quadrants in an overall ‘church& society action matrix’ my real intention would be to see us all, regardless of our forte or focus, to move ever closer to a ‘radical middle’ of God’s intentions for his world. I of course have but one perspective, and will require critique and conversation if this material is going to be more than under-informed theory.
4. In the background of this discussion will be a bias I have for what could be called an ‘incarnational ecclesiology,’ a simplified and deepened view of the church which sees it as Jesus Christ re-incarnated, referenced from multiple biblical angles but especially John’s writings. This view of the church is, I believe, essential for the kind of harvest we would seek that is equal to the discipling of whole nations. (See the latter third of this paper/presentation for a laying out of this ecclesiology in more detail and biblical study.)

I will seek to only partially set the stage for this discussion, an overview of the following:

**SLIDE 2: A New Millennium—New Possibilities**

Introduction: as cited, the times we live in constitute a shift from spectra and continua – two-dimensional and polarity thinking, toward synergistic, three-dimensional and non-polar approaches. We are dealing with a shrinking globe, no more ‘magnetic north’ in global mission, no more West-to-the-Rest unidirectional mission. So how are we to look at the world, the church and the task? I would suggest here: in synergistic, integrating ways, and with a more Trinitarian theological commitment. Here are some of the major theses we set out in the remainder of the paper:



**A New Millennium—New Possibilities**

- In the New World Dis-order the future is far more important when change is easily 10 times faster
  - “The Future just ain’t what it used to be!”
- Fading of Previous Distinctions: e.g. Us vs. Them
  - “Charismatic” vs. “Non-charismatic”
  - Western vs. nonwestern
  - Solidarity vs. Modality
  - Conservative vs. Liberal
  - Evangelism vs. Social Action
- Advantages of the Post-modern milieu
  - Judging the gods of modernity inside and outside church
  - the “Third Way” (not having to ever on ‘either side’)
  - Moving from continuum-thinking to added dimensions: non-categorical, contra-polar, non-antithetical

When you’re looking for a place to sit, three legs are better than two

Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 2002

**SLIDE 3: What We Will Attempt to Cover**

1. Introduction to the Word, Work and Wonder spheres: metaphors, trinitarian leanings, scriptural foci, central events, buzzwords, traditions, weaknesses, human tri-partite

categories; and the current information-age centripetal forces at work. A new approach to and understanding of “We” and the current universal challenge to “Wineskins”

2. Introduction of the Guilt, Shame and Fear dimensions of culture: a battle of whether the West – post-Christian now, and losing its moorings – was ever THE purveyor of the one Biblical Worldview (is there one or are there many “Biblical worldview(s)”?)
3. Introduction of the realities of the nonwestern church & world: three “P”s of Persecution, Poverty and the Powers
4. Introduction to the Seed, Plant, Fruit spheres of the Church’s missionary task – related directly to Word, Work and Wonder
5. Introduction to the Harvest, Health and Holism pictures/commitments of the Filipino DAWN project post-2000
6. Introduction to a “church & society Action matrix” and a “disciplined nations matrix”
7. Some provisional conclusions

**What will we attempt to cover?**

1. Application of a *trinitarian* view to creation, life/personhood, culture, redemption, church, & mission
2. Word, Work and Wonder rationale and substance
3. Guilt, Shame and Fear cultural dimensions
4. Three “P”s of non-western church experience
5. Three spheres of the mission of the church
6. Health, Harvest, Holism commitments of the Filipino post-2000 DAWN vision
7. A critical ‘disciplining nations matrix’ and a constructive ‘church & society action grid’
8. Some provisional conclusions

3

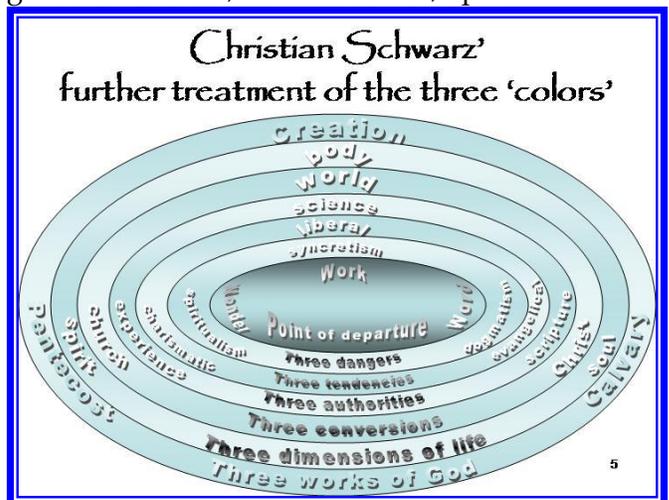


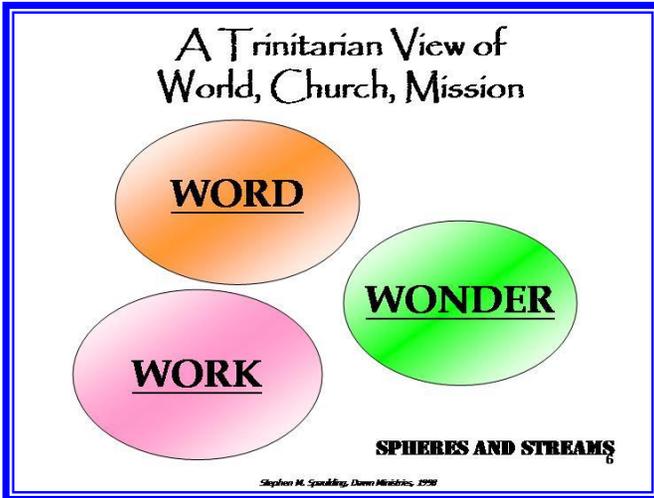
**SLIDE 4: A Trinitarian Worldview**

This ‘Trinitarian Worldview’ for lack of better term, is initially borrowed from a World Vision presentation in the mid- 1990’s, was largely filled in with the remaining material in this paper by the author, who more recently discovered similar and helpful parallel insights explored by the German, Christian Schwartz, who developed the whole “*Natural Church Development*” scheme. Schwartz presents a trinitarian approach to the Christian perspective and life by beginning with the Trinity and demonstrating close correlation between each member of the trinity and a major component of life (e.g. Father-Creator, Son-Redeemer, Spirit-

Councilor/Sanctifier), including three works of God, dimensions of life, conversions, authorities, tendencies and dangers. I have developed, independently, a quite similar set of distinctions, taken more from the perspective of the global church’s existing streams, the mission of the church and its involvement in different cultural systems.

**SLIDE 5: Christian Schwarz’ Trinitarian View**





SLIDE 6: A Trinitarian View of World, Church, Mission

**SLIDE 7: Church Sphere One: Word Group**

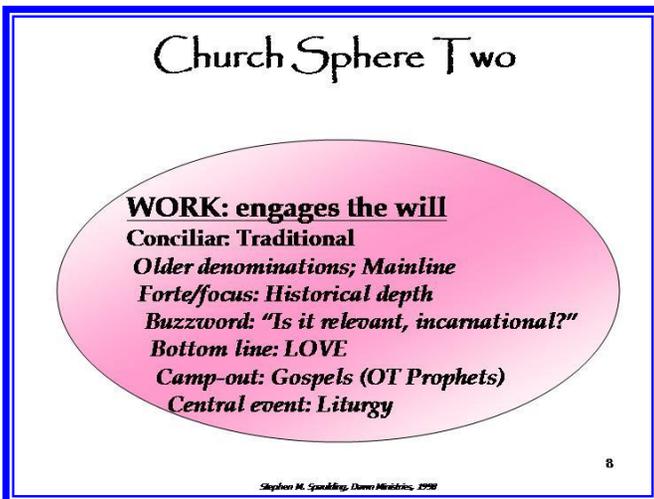
The Word stream are the classic, conservative Evangelicals, those known within Christendom as the “people of the Book;” of proclaiming a verbal message of salvation, of stressing the content or formulae of the gospel. Because of this, their preaching, teaching, church services and witness often appeal most to the mind, to cognitive categories, and sometimes church services resemble classrooms; Bible STUDY is very important. The bottom line is, in a sense, truth.

Because of their inclination to systematize truth and doctrine, their favorite NT portions are usually the epistles, and in the OT the Wisdom literature. Of course for them the central event of the worship gathering is the preaching of the Word. The watchword or litmus test for new ideas among these people is usually: “Is it biblical?” And finally, the Evangelical stream, given its rootedness in eschatological hope, can be seen to have a future-temporal orientation (evidenced in just one glance through a traditional gospel hymnal).



**SLIDE 8: Church Sphere Two: Work Group**

The Work stream is more often to be found among those whom Peter Wagner called “conscientious liberals,” people who are often concerned more with the “look” of the gospel than the “book,” with “incarnation” and with the social implications of the gospel as fundamental to their thinking. For them, the watchword or litmus test of authenticity for things might be: “Is it relevant?” or “Is it incarnational?” The bottom line for these people might well



be Love (as opposed to Truth for conservatives), and they back this up with a deep affection for the life and ministry of Jesus, his “gospel to the poor” and the many acts of compassion and prophetic witness he gave as testimony to his being the true image of God. While truth and Word engage the mind, Work engages the will and forces one into the immediate needs of our surroundings. These older, ‘mainline denominations,’ have their roots in the past, the old, liberal tradition including the ‘social gospel’ which, in the process of bringing out the theology of the Kingdom of God, at times lost sight of the King. But with their spiritual

renewal comes a refreshing recommitment to the most practical elements of the kingdom of God, its communal nature and the prophetic requirement of transformational living and the calling of all creation back to the Creator.

**SLIDE 9: Church Sphere Three: Wonder Group**

The Wonder stream is, of course, the more charismatic tradition. While they may also be ‘people of the book’ and may care much about “incarnation” they are best recognized for their commitment to the ‘life of the Spirit’ and to whether life and ministry are characterized by the power of God, the immanence of his presence...hence, ‘wonder.’ These are usually the younger denominations and independent or ‘post-denominational’ churches among us. Their watchword is: “Is it Spirit-filled?” Their worship events tend to center around corporate praise and ‘ministry times’ during which God’s immediate presence is palpably felt and where God is ‘experienced.’ These would say that while we are not necessarily to be led by our emotions, God has created and redeemed this key part of our being and we were meant to worship him with our ‘whole heart.’ In a sense they provide a corrective to much of mainstream Christianity’s fretting over ‘experiences’ by re-animating the fully biblical notion of the necessity of experiencing God in all our dimensions, emphatically in the present, not just the past (Calvary) and the future (Return). Healing, signs and wonders are expected elements of their corporate life and witness. Prayer is therefore then a high and very practical priority.

## Church Sphere Three

**WONDER: captures the spirit/affect**  
**Charismatic: Independent**  
*Younger groups, post-denominational*  
**Forté/focus: Present realization**  
**Buzzword: “Is it Spirit-filled?”**  
**Bottom line: POWER**  
**Camp-out: Acts (OT Historical)**  
**Central event: Worship & ‘ministry’**

9

Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 2008

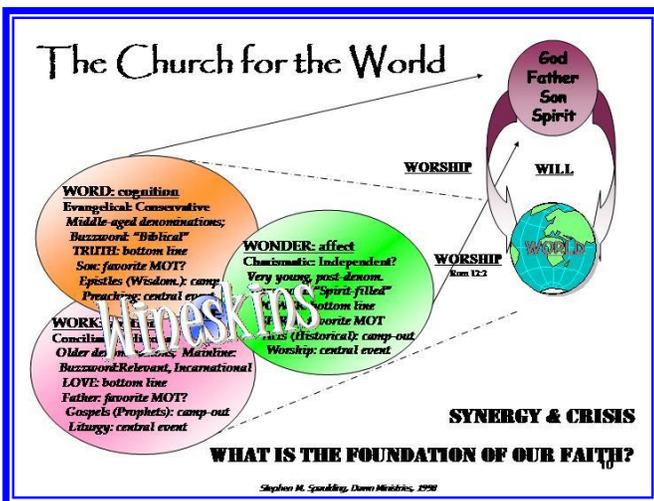
**SLIDE 10: The Church for the World**

Eight “W”s sum up for me the global ecclesial picture at the turn of the millennium:

1. The World: this is my Father’s world; God has a clear-cut desire/agenda for this world, even though it is also under the spell of the evil one and the kingdom of darkness.
2. God’s will (see What is God’s deepest desire slide...another presentation) is that none perish in this world. If that is his will, why is it not ours?

3. Word, Work and Wonder, borrowed from another source, is a very handy way of summarizing three prominent streams or spheres of the current Christian global church scene, in terms of theology, praxis, ecclesial structures, favorite scriptures and member of Trinity, “bottom line,” buzzwords, emphases in corporate worship, etc. We live in an age in which the lines are fuzzifying between these formerly distinct groupings, thanks mostly to the information age and a vastly shrunken globe.

4. WE are those who deal increasingly with all of the above traditions and find ourselves uncomfortable aligning ourselves strictly with



any one of them, although we also increasingly appreciate each one's contribution to an overall, "holistic" presentation of Christ and his Kingdom to the world, as "we" focus on mission.

5. Our Worship as a global and local expression of church is becoming more and more 'becoming' in light of the groundswell of synergy, unity (including repentance for past sins), and overlap between the traditions, takes on new dimensions while harking back to more biblical uses of the word. While we maintain a vertical corporate worship, we realize that our worship vertically is no more credible and real than its manifestation in the "nasty-now-n-now" (Rom. 12:1-2)

6. Lastly, the Wineskins of all these traditions, young and old, are being called into question as never before. Many within each one of these groupings are asking what went wrong in 300 AD when Christianity became legal and ultimately forced itself upon the host civilization. The structures which were put in place at the time have not really been called into question even through the violent rites of passage the church as endured like the Protestant reformation. The clergy-laity divide, the 'edifice complex,' the bureaucratization and institutionalization of the church have generally weakened, not strengthened, its impact on the world, and also left the vast majority of would-be members on the outside, not all that interested in getting inside. Today, everyone seems more willing than ever to review their organizational/ecclesial structures in the interests of seeing the Church become the vanguard of Christ's Kingdom as it was originally inaugurated.

A brief afterthought. When we realize that these traditions or streams very generally develop their theological points of departure from radically different bases of truth, love or (more tentatively) power/presence, we may be tempted to ask ourselves, is any one of them right? – although the question in itself reveals something of a bias for truth as the baseline. Does God himself derive his actions of love from his inherent righteousness, or is it vice versa? This is a debate which my father and I have carried on in recent years. In a more pertinent arena, in our network for the Buddhist world, we were presented a paper this last annual meeting which, in seeking foundational terms for the boundaries of inter-religious dialogue, concluded propositional truth as the indubitable ground from which all further engagement flows. Another critical application of this question has to do with revelation and authority: Do we derive Christ from the Scriptures or the Scriptures from Christ? When we allow for some sort of dialogue or trialectic between truth – as a propositional point of departure for any credible message, love – as the relational, trinitarian precedent for the universe, and power – as the divine capacity to do the divine will – the victory and rule of God, then we can at least broaden the non-negotiables of our vista. We can recognize that because God cannot be reduced to any one primal category, neither can our reality, our theology, task, etc.

**SLIDE 16: Three Global Cultural Divides** (some redundancy here between #16 and the 11-15 afterward)

I read a book recently that dealt with three prime expressions of civilizations or cultures worldwide and throughout history, which, interestingly enough correspond closely with our categories above. While I didn't have access to the e-book at the time (by Rolland Muller: *Honor and Shame* 2000), I think I reconstructed his basic idea here. He brings out some commonly established views of cultural frames-of-reality for the purposes of more effective mission, especially as we Westerners continue to make forays into cultural settings radically different from their own. These labels might have more to do with 'fallen cultural frameworks' than what makes our various cultures beautiful. But in the grander scheme of things (and begging forgiveness for overgeneralization throughout), these really are elements which beautify our societies, I believe, at least through what Christ has accomplished in redeeming each one.

Certain cultures tend to view the human problem through eyes of legal guilt-versus-justice or righteousness. Others see it more relationally through the eyes of shame and honor. Still others view it more from a cosmic perspective of fear versus victory and deliverance.

I won't go into detail here, but the point the book's author makes, and I tend to agree wholeheartedly, is that the gospel, which has always been trans-cultural, reaches into our worldview at the core of culture and heart-language. The reader will see direct connections here with my previous categories of Word, Work and Wonder.

I was spending a few minutes in a scheduled reading one day, came upon Romans 5 and met a fascinating correspondence of these three cultural paradigms of what's wrong with humanity.

- a. Paul states that "at just the right time, when we were still *powerless*, Christ died" for us.
- b. Just two verses later, he reiterates, with a slightly different slant: "While we were still *sinner*s, Christ died for us...we now have been *justified*...."
- c. Another two verses and it comes again, but worded still differently: "When we were God's *enemies*, we were *reconciled* to him through the death of his Son."

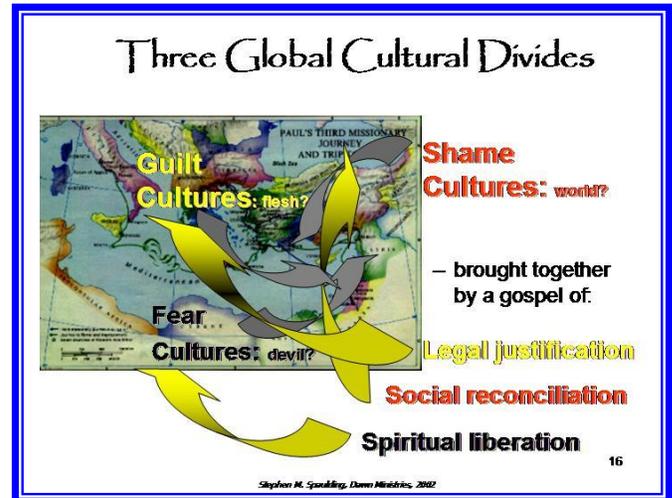
Those who are powerless need power to overcome what stands in their way of deliverance.

Those who are sinners require justification and being made right before a just judge.

Those who are enemies need reconciliation and restoring of honor in the place of shame.

What's the practicality in all this?

When we deal strictly with people of our own society, we experience conflict but tend to resolve it under terms of agreed upon expectations, or 'terms of engagement.' So that whether our Western societies are perceived as stable or decadent, they still tend to deal with their conflicts in courtrooms in which "Just the facts, Ma'am" is still pretty much the standard of viability, whether we're Christians or pagans. The gospel in guilt cultures, quite naturally, speaks most plainly to people's guilt, to establishing rightness and wrongness and meting out rewards. (Historically we can thank the Greeks and especially Romans for the classical codifying of



culture around the undisputed legal system of antiquity – and the birth of what was to become ‘the West.’)

In the case of shame cultures, those which tend to dominate the so-called “Non-west” or “East,” family or village honor seems to be primary in order of social importance.

I have been told by (exasperated?) veteran missionaries that in the case of a pastor in a Thai village who is caught in some serious sin, the greatest disruption comes not from the knowledge within the congregation that he is sinning, but in the confronting of the leader’s sin. This is outrageous to many Western minds, but natural to those for whom the shaming of a leader might be a far greater outrage than the knowledge of his specific sin/ guilt. When the gospel enters these societies, it comes to free people from their shame and to reconcile those who are enemies, both human and divine, to bring harmony back to damaged relationships, without excusing patently wrong behavior (see Paul’s handling of the Corinthians).

What about ‘fear cultures?’ These tend to be those cultures which we view as having an animistic worldview. These peoples live in a cosmos animated by spiritual powers that dictate to all of life. When the gospel enters these cultures, it comes with power and provides the deliverance so desperately needed by people ‘who live in fear’ of death and the powers of darkness.

At least two very practical things lie within this broad comparison:

1. Sensitivity to culture means in part being able to see the gospel as ‘the power of God’ for each socio-psychological setting and letting it speak most closely to the heart language, the profoundest felt needs, knowing we’re in step with the Spirit who created each one in the first place.
2. The Scriptures were unaccidentally born in a ‘cradle of civilizations,’ the hinge of the three great continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. In close proximity to expressions of each of these civilizations, it is the answer to each major culture’s deepest need for good news, whether freedom from guilt, shame or fear, since it is from all of these that Jesus came to free us.

And, of course, each group ultimately requires Kingdom restoration in all three, not just one.

**SLIDES 11-14: Three Cosmic Struggles: world, flesh, devil AND shame, guilt, fear**

**Three Cosmic Struggles**

**FLESH:**  
**Guilt cultures**

**DEVIL:**  
**Fear cultures**

**WORLD:**  
**Shame cultures**

11

Roland Muller, apostles to John Steward: 1/03

**a) Guilt Cultures**

**The Problem is Sin and the Flesh**  
*Right and Wrong paramount*  
*Justice/Forgiveness the need*  
*Gospel presents Justification*  
*Propositional approach*  
*Metaphor: Courtroom*  
*Christ is Prophet/messenger of truth*  
**WESTern traditions?**

12

**b) Shame Cultures**

**The Problem: Shame & the 'World'**  
*Social Harmony paramount*  
*Harmony/Acceptance the need*  
*Gospel presents Reconciliation*  
*Relational/Serving approach*  
*Metaphor: Living room*  
*Christ is Priest/mediator*  
**EASTern traditions?**

13

**c) Fear Cultures**

**The Problem is Suffering & 'the Devil'**  
*Overcoming powers paramount*  
*Victory/Freedom the need*  
*Gospel presents Deliverance*  
*Encounter approach*  
*Metaphor: Battlefield or slave market*  
*Christ is King/master*  
**TRIBal traditions?**

14

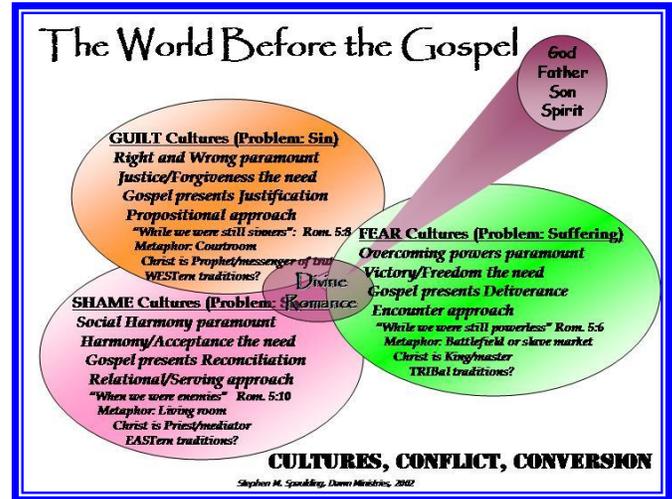
Borrowed from popular anthropology and the book by Roland Muller, *Honor & Shame*, I further develop this triad of civilizational psyches as corollary to the three spheres of church life, faith, hope, love and the three 'all's' of the Great Commission – elaborated below. Interestingly, Paul, the great systematizer of the gospel, in Romans, at the pinnacle of his treatise on soteriology, expresses the human condition before salvation in each one of these traditions, seeming to see the necessity of the gospel to address each major societal orientation with three complimentary facets of the same salvation: freedom from guilt, deliverance from the powers and reconciliation/harmony between enemies.

Not only was Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century come in the 'fullness of time,' but Palestine as all biblical scholars will agree, was, even in its humiliated state under Rome, always this hinge culture, bridging the three vast continents of the world of its day: Asia, Africa and Europe, a 'fullness of place.' And in the crudest possible generalization, these three continents might eventually reflect the dominance of these three expressions of the human state: guilt, shame and fear.

Without violating anyone’s cultural sensitivity further, it can be readily recognized that there is no “pure” expression of any one of these cultural functions/ dysfunctions.

And the author of *Honor and Shame* seems to observe a rise and fall in each of these expressions throughout history, at least over the past several thousand years...with one expression having dominance in the leading civilization(s) of the epoch – even if the same basic civilization from one epoch to the next.

God of course offered justification to the guilty, shalom (reconciliation) to the alienated/enemy and power to the powerless in his salvation/gospel. And this takes our more localized governing metaphors of say courtroom, living room or battlefield and lifts them into a full-orbed divine, cosmic romance with his lost humanity.



**SLIDE 17: Three Macro-missional Barriers**

In my now frequent travels between the East and the West (c. a dozen Asian nations, living in the Philippines and North America), it has increasingly struck me how the powerful churches of the missionary-sending nations of the West, up until recently, have generally been devoid of three overarching realities which are both part of New Testament churchly experience and the generally accepted condition of the churches in most of the non-West:

1. Persecution: almost anywhere one looks within the classic non-West, there seem to be multiplied cases of genuine suffering by the church, abuse of religious freedoms, and in some cases violent all-out battle on Christians.



2. Poverty: no one will disagree with the baseline global claim that the West still holds the global purse-strings, and that the world perceived this vast majority of the world’s wealth to be held and perpetuated by the ‘Christian West’ or North. The tragic fact of the matter is that there is almost a one-to-one correspondence between the least Christian societies of the world and their grinding poverty. While the case can and should be made that there is also a correspondence between this reality and fundamentally causal worldview differences, this cannot be a state of world inequity which reflects positively on the ‘Christian world’ over time.

3. Powers: due to the Enlightenment/Modern framework in the story of the West, though our biblical roots are pregnant with supernaturalistic realities, our worldview and commensurate church/mission practice has at least until recently been largely devoid of a proper understanding or dealing with the powers (both supernatural and systemic); whereas most societies outside of the West, even with the advent of globalization/urbanization and other secularizing forces, still hold to much more animistic or supernaturalistic paradigms of reality – which would be more consistent with the worldview of the peoples of biblical times as well.

What does this say to the missionary-sending power-bases? We have had significant blind spots in at least three arenas (which interestingly correspond to the three major streams of the church), in which we lack basic ministry experience, but which are normative ingredients in the life of the NT church and which are also routine to the world-experience of those outside our geopolitical borders. These three arenas require of us as Westerners a new humility and all of us in the global Body of Christ a fresh resolve as we seek to bring the “Faith – confronting the powers, Hope – in the face of persecution, and Love – in answer to poverty” that this world demands.

***Moving to a View of the Church’s Task, we return to the three spheres/streams***

***SLIDE 18: Wonder: Seed***

As Charismatics approach the Great Commission, they put the emphasis on prayer and the preliminaries of seeking a genuine revelation from God – both within the church and certainly within the community in need of transformation. This really places them at the top of the Matthew 28 GC passage, in which Jesus said first: “All authority has been given unto me in heaven and earth.” This is the charismatic issue of the Great Commission – the source of our authority or power. All else flows from it. That is why I parallel this sphere to the “seed” of GC activity. These are the people who carry out spiritual mapping efforts to locate all spiritual sources of resistance to the gospel. They are the ones doing intense spiritual warfare against all the forces of darkness in the interests of a God-sized gospel breakthrough.



**Wonder: Seed**

**SEED: “All Authority”**  
**Priority: PRAY**  
**De-structuring the Task**  
**Calls for a Revelation**  
**Preparation, Proofs**  
**Spiritual Warfare,–Mapping, City-church**  
**Proponents: Otis Jr., Wagner, Silvano**  
**Expression: Harvest Evangelism**  
**FAITH in the face of the powers**  
**Preliminary: Intercession**

18

Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 2008

In light of the fact that the church in so many places around the world is confronting – as never before – a three-fold enemy of Poverty, Persecution and the Powers, it seems that it is the charismatic tradition which presents FAITH (of 1 Cor. 13:13) in the face of the POWERS, unabashedly storming the gates of hell for the advance of the church, whether through spiritual warfare prayer or through demonstrable signs of God’s kingdom such as healing and deliverance from demons. In that sense, they are providing us with both preparation and proofs for the gospel and, in relation to the other groups, are, in a way, deconstructing the missionary task.

## Word: Plant

**PLANT: "All Nations"**

**Priority: PREACH**

**Quantifying the Task**

**Calls for a Saturation or Coverage  
Proclamation, Persuasion, Presence**

**UPGs, Evangelism, Church planting**

**Proponents: Winter, Bush, Montgomery**

**Expression: early DAWN, SC's in IMB**

**HOPE in the face of persecution**

**Prelim: Strategy, Research**

19

Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 1998

### SLIDE 19: Word: Plant

Conservatives or mainstream (?) evangelicals, it seems, have been the main ones pushing for "quantifying" the task of world mission. When they think of 'transformation' they tend to think in terms of the thousands of people groups without an indigenous church or the billions of people without saving knowledge of Christ. That is why they are really calling for saturation, for the fulfilling of the command to "disciple ALL THE NATIONS." To disciple ALL the nations, they say, one must know how many there are, what we mean by 'nation' and where the gospel needs proclaiming and churches need planting. These are the fierce pragmatists of the Great Commission,

doing research and strategizing for maximum return on missionary investment. Moreover, since these are the missionary traditions of the people of the book, in light of the things confronting the global church, it seems the conservatives provide the greatest HOPE in the face of PERSECUTION of all the groups. They are the ones concerned that the gospel get a fair and clear hearing, that it be actually proclaimed and that people are persuaded compellingly to follow Christ and become responsible members of his church. Concerned for "preaching and planting churches" they also constitute a second phase in the fulfillment of the words of Christ.

Parenthetically, it is no coincidence that Cameron Townsend (founder of WBT/SIL and Donald McGavran (founder of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission) were two of the seminal minds in the mission/church growth enterprise of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century with their emphasis on 'ta ethne' both linguistically (in terms of mission frontiers) and ethnographically (in terms of the growth of the church) and that Ralph Winter and Jim Montgomery (essentially modern originators of *Unreached People Group* (UPG) and *Saturation Church Planting* (SCP) thinking respectively) were very close to McGavran in his latter years, all of them residing within blocks of each other in the Pasadena area in the 1980s and early 90's. In 1974, Ralph Winter presented his historic paper on the grossly neglected arena of unreached peoples at the Lausanne global mission conference. During the same year Jim Montgomery saw the leaders of 75 major denominations in the Philippines officially launch the first ever Discipling A Whole Nation project – for the planting of 50,000 churches by the year 2000. So, the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century mission enterprise has in some ways been reflected in these two men's global visions – clearly with many other streams and trends ongoing. The last decade of the century saw the AD2000 movement take center stage as a facilitative mega-network for global mission advance, finally distilling its many tracks into two primary expressions: 1) the Joshua Project which sought to continue the identification, adoption and penetration of the remaining unreached peoples (UPG's) of the earth; and 2) the National Initiatives project which sought to capitalize on the growing unity of national fellowships of churches for the saturation of all of their populations with the living expression of Christ through local fellowships (SCP). This actually meant a verbal inverse of the oft-repeated AD2000 motto: from "A church for every people and the gospel for every person" to "The gospel for every people (Joshua Project – including an initial/indigenous church planting movement) and a church for every person (National Initiatives and other DAWN-type manifestations)." It might be argued persuasively

that McGavran actually was the fountainhead of both of these movements (having also coined the term “DAWN” while visiting the Philippines in the early 1980’s).

**SLIDE 20: Work: Fruit**

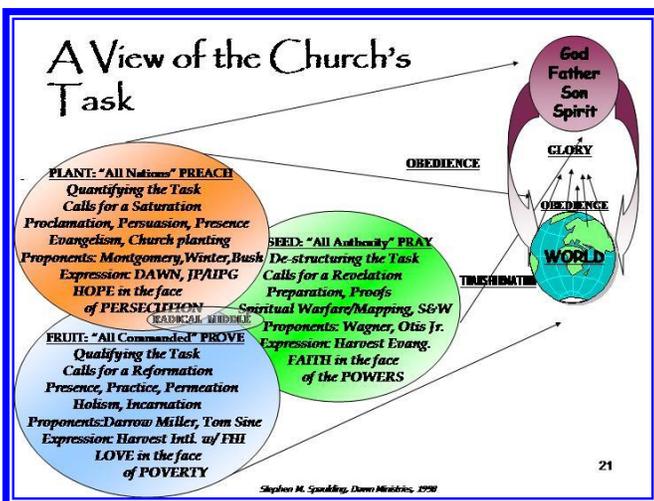
Lastly, and returning to the older traditions, there are those who move to the “qualifying” of the task, and are not so concerned that churches get planted, but rather “what kind of churches” get planted. The FRUIT of the gospel, its authenticity, is what most concerns this latter group. They are interested in the gospel LIVED more than PREACHED. If incarnation and relevance are their buzzwords, then this group is preoccupied with the credibility of the gospel over time – seeing the message PROVED along very practical lines, whether empowering the poor, confronting evil in all its forms, following Jesus’ style of ministering to people’s most basic needs, in the midst of preaching and teaching. If the Charismatics are calling for a supernatural revelation, and Conservatives call for a saturation, these people are looking for a reformation, genuine transformation at the levels of community and society. Not only are simple deeds of mercy carried out, but also prophetic witness is brought to bear on the structures of evil and injustice which have been so generally neglected by the church but which are eminently germane to the announcing of the good rule of God. When embracing the indispensability of Word and Wonder, this component of the Great Commission speaks to the teaching of “all the nations to OBSERVE ALL that I’ve commanded you.” And given the overwhelming need of so much of the world, this group, it seems, is demonstrating LOVE in the face of POVERTY (or deprivation/oppression in all its forms).

**Work: Fruit**

**FRUIT: “All Commanded”**  
**Priority: PROVE**  
**Qualifying the Task**  
**Calls for a Reformation**  
**Presence, Practice, Permeation**  
**Holism, Incarnation**  
**Proponents: Darrow Miller, Miriam Adeney**  
**Expression: Harvest Intl. w/ FHI**  
**LOVE in the face of poverty**  
**Prelim: Compassion/anger**

Stephen M. Spaulding, Dawn Ministries, 1998

20



**SLIDE 21: A View of the Church's Task**

The three intersecting circles correspond directly to the previous Venn diagram,

- \* Charismatics in the “all authority” sphere
- \* Conservatives/evangelicals in the “all nations” sphere
- \* Conciliar/mainline in the “all I’ve commanded” sphere

While it will be clear that these are broad generalizations and that the emphases do not necessarily even dovetail with our experience of

these ecclesial spheres, I lay them out this way because I believe the primary proponents of these emphases have their roots in the best of these particular camps. So, for instance, while Mainline groups may not be known for their emphasis on “teaching the nations to observe all that I’ve commanded you,” their liberal tradition is indeed the fountainhead in the modern literature of the social gospel and of a persistent return to the social and this-worldly

implications of the gospel while Evangelicals, Fundamentalists and most Charismatics have until recently tended to bifurcate reality into what Darrow Miller calls the evangelical Gnostic categories of secular/sacred....

Each group obviously has its own strengths and pitfalls. This is specifically why they are arranged as overlapping and converging circles. No “purists” remain in this climate of exchange of ideas and the age of information. And this means that we all own the entire rest of the Body. When one member suffers, indeed we all suffer. So, even at the macro-level, we are increasingly (and positively) INTER-dependent, learning from one another and acting as Christ-like correctives to each other’s shortcomings.

The three “all”s of the Great Commission come from Matthew 28

Faith, Hope and Love of course relate to 1 Cor. 13

The Powers, Persecution and Poverty are the three primary things facing the church in the non-West which the church in the West has very little to say to, often neither experiencing nor knowing well how to confront.

The overall diagram points to God’s “program” for his world including ultimately the “obedience of the nations” spoken of by both Paul and Christ in reference to the Great Commission. As the church becomes more bound up in a seamless whole, reflecting the dynamic unity of Christ’s high priestly prayer in John 17, following more thoroughly the Lord in his mission, it will take on the complementary components described above, which until recently have tended to be the province of just one or two groups in isolation from the rest of the Body. If we achieve genuine synergy, and begin to look and act more like a true Body of Christ, (even in these areas of Word, Work and Wonder) then we can hope that the transformation we all long for within our communities and nations will actually be modeled first by our corporate balance, indeed our own internal transformation. And as we obey the Lord, coming closer together and Praying, Preaching and Proving the gospel into our own lives, churches and institutions, we will begin to see our surrounding communities touched with the amazing, unbelievable power of the Spirit, in signs and wonders, in the power of the preached message and the proofs of love in action at the most practical level of need. Our worship will then have meaning beyond the four walls of our buildings and we will see unprecedented harvest.

---

<sup>i</sup> Named after the excellent treatment of post Cold-war geopolitics by the Harvard political scientist, Samuel Huntington’s famous *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). Many have criticized Huntington’s largely pessimistic posture, but events of the past several years have borne out much of the credibility of his future-scenarios-building.

<sup>ii</sup> See the article by the author: *The Redrawing of the Global Map in the Post-Cold-War Mission Era*.

<sup>iii</sup> See the book of the same title by Alvin Toffler (1993).