

# De-Westernizing the Gospel

## The Recovery of a Biblical Worldview

*For some people de-westernizing the Gospel means making it more Eastern; for others it means a better contextualization of the Gospel. However, because we have not been successful to maintain our biblical roots in the West the problem is deeper and points to the need to eliminate from our faith all incompatible elements that have eroded our foundations, robbed us of our life and have weakened our witness. It all points to a recovery of a biblical worldview.*

by Hans M. Weerstra

What a painful thing it is to write an article like this. As a quintessential son of the Reformation, a Calvinist, an Evangelical, a Dutchman, a Third Wave charismatic Christian, and a frontier missiologist, I feel I can say like Paul “that I count all these loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Phil. 3:4-8)

We know that the apostle’s background and education, and even religious zeal, was part of the providential mix of factors that made up the foundations for his theological and missiological success. Then what do I mean? Do I despise my heritage? Certainly not! But when I compare myself, as I inevitably must as a cross-cultural missionary with the religious elite (priests) of other faiths in the world,<sup>1</sup> I find myself as a Westerner eclipsed by the devotional capacity of my devout Hindu friends, impoverished in dress when compared to the textures and colors of the Native American, stand mute as a priest of the Most High God when asked to speak the language of the soul, and appear only casually interested in restoring the honor of the Father in heaven when compared to the fervent zeal of a Muslim. It is in this spirit I write and “press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14)

### Mission: A Gift TO THE CHURCH

Part of being involved in frontier missiology is that it gives you a rare opportunity to look at yourself and your culture’s pre-suppositions. It fulfills in a greater way the “I-thou” dimension of being, something far greater than what a mono-cultural perspective will afford.<sup>2</sup> What I mean by this is that if I perceive the priesthood (or the ministry of the Church including missions) only through an American Western lens then I might not see anything unusual or wrong. But it is precisely this “going into all the world” that gives us a unique opportunity to reflect and compare the “priesthood in America” with the priesthood of other peoples. My growing conviction, and for more than one reason, is that we in the West are seriously impoverished on many fronts as “stewards of the mysteries of God.”

In this light, it seems totally reasonable that missionaries should lead the way. Missions and missionaries are not only God’s ministry gift (apostolic gift) to the Church called to reach and disciple the unreached world, they also, *and just as importantly*, are able to keep the Church true, pure, and focused on God’s plan and purpose in the world.

What makes Mission, the apostolic mission gift, so special? And what is it about Mission that qualifies her to lead

the way in the process of de-westernizing the Gospel and help us get back on target?

I believe missionaries are uniquely qualified for the task due the unique nature of their work, the unique talents and abilities God has given them coupled with their unique experiences with which missionaries are particularly “blessed.” The mission qualification mainly has to do with the fact that mission work is cross-cultural, i.e., missionaries communicate the Gospel to people of different cultures and in different languages. As such they get expertise in this field as no others in Christendom. For that reason, missionaries are particularly able to help us see ourselves and our faith, they serve as our “thou” and thus provide a more objective view of our situation. As such they can help us de-westernize the Gospel, lead us to understand what the message really is, and help us to get back on track.

For example, all missionaries true to their call and task, learn that they need to “de-culturize” the Gospel, i.e., lay aside their own understanding and preconceived notions of the message formed largely by their own culture. In cross-cultural communication theory this is called “decoding the message.” Although by no means easy, missionaries as none others in the Body of Christ get to use and understand this process. For some missionaries it is discovering for the first time an authentic biblical faith and call it “Christianity rediscovered.”<sup>3</sup>

Once this has been achieved, missionaries can then begin the equally dauntless task (after they have adequately learned the language and culture of their people) to properly contextualize the Gospel for the people to whom they have been sent. This process in cross-cultural communications is called “encoding the message.” With a high level of accuracy missionaries need to be able to do this for the “respondent culture” so the people can hear the message, have adequate access to the Gospel, so that they can make a proper response.<sup>4</sup>

The latter is absolutely crucial to Missions, because without it no effective Gospel communication can occur, nor is it possible to plant the Church in any viable way among the peoples we are called to reach. Effective missionary work means working for deep level change, i.e., affecting change in the worldview of the respondent culture, not change in values nor just change in the behavior of the people. This can only happen to the degree that we know the worldview of the respondent culture, and to the degree we know our own—to the degree that we possess an adequate biblical worldview ourselves.

Therefore, when missionaries properly do their work they become particularly qualified, become experts so to speak, as few others in the Church. As such missionaries can help us 1) spot cultural accretions in the Gospel and help us see “syncretism” for what it is, including what it looks like at home, and 2) deculturize (in our case de-westernize) the Gospel from those cultural elements that obscure, reduce, erode and/or contaminate the faith because they are essentially incompatible with the Bible. Mission therefore is God’s unique and significant “ministry gifting” to His People. Mission in this sense can help us lead the way in this task all important task to de-westernize the Gospel and help us recover biblical apostolic Christianity.

## SYNCRETISM AT HOME

What is syncretism? For those of us who need a refresher, briefly stated, syncretism is the mixture of incompatible elements that cannot nor should ever be mixed.<sup>5</sup> Syncretism in a Christian setting is the mixture of essential Christian biblical beliefs with beliefs (assumptions) that are incompatible with each other. The result of such a mixture in Christianity is something else—it no longer is biblical Christianity. Although those who live in it may want to call and see themselves as Christian, because they no longer consider themselves Hindus, Muslims or Animists, etc., however, if syncretism has occurred they are not living the true reality of the Gospel. In fact the apostle Paul in his day would call it “another gospel” or a “no-gospel.” (See Galatians 1:6ff.)

Does this describe our situation at home? Does it come anywhere close to our situation in the West? Mission anthropologists have consistently warned us of the dangers of syncretism on the mission field, but few have alerted us of its danger at home. I want to state unequivocally that syncretism happens not only on the mission fields of the world, where we can handle it with comparative ease, maybe because it is comfortably removed from us. However, syncretism also can happen at home, in fact, it has already happened to a dangerous degree with devastating consequences. It is high time, therefore, we be alerted of it, and at the same time make every effort to correct it. Christianity in the West has become syncretistic at home because it has mixed incompatible elements, beliefs and values, especially worldview assumptions, that were never meant to be mixed. In the process Western Christianity has lost much of its biblical apostolic roots, and therefore is no longer living and working and doing missions with a full deck—we no longer live the reality of true biblical faith and life as God reveals it in His Word. We should see it for what it is: the dangerous and

destructive and ugly mixture of syncretism at home with all its devastating consequences.

The Gospel in the West, including the Christian way of life, needs to be de-westernized of its non-Christian elements (of paganism disguised in modern dress) plus we need to recover (re-discover) its essence, i.e., its power, love, truth and life.

We must be careful to settle for nothing less. For instance, in our attempt to make the Gospel less Western we must not settle for making it more Eastern. Even though at the end of the process the Gospel may indeed look more Eastern, and as such be more attractive to the unreached peoples in the 10/40 Window, we must nevertheless avoid this pitfall. The de-culturizing process which is needed must go far deeper in order to be truly effective.

Syncretism on the mission field and at home must not be confused with the needed art and skill of contextualization, i.e., of making a proper fit of the Gospel into a foreign recipient culture. Syncretism at home or abroad can only be corrected (as well as avoided) when the Gospel is properly known as God revealed it, mysteries and all, including its deepest metaphysical constructs, including its inevitable offenses and the unavoidable scandal it causes in human hearts—including in the heart of sinful modern man.

## THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE WEST

Premier missionary spokesmen, Patrick Johnstone, has seen the Western world for what it is. Johnstone has seen that all Western countries, plus their churches, need to be revitalized. If in doubt, take a few moments to read Johnstone’s *Operation World* on just a few Western countries (try to pick them at random) and note the general condition of those countries plus the needs of the Church is them. You will be both shocked and become thoroughly convinced. The

evidence is overwhelming. All Western nations, and the Church within them, are plagued by the collapse of their Judeo-Christian heritage which has resulted in a moral and spiritual demise in practically all areas of life and culture, with a deep disdain for anything Christian. In the UK for instance, “The blanket of materialism and the television culture have deadened the sensitivity of Christians and non-Christian alike”

What about Canada? Johnstone writes, “The Christian Church has been marginalized in society. Many major denominations have suffered disastrous declines in membership. The loss of biblical roots and lack of vision for evangelism, compromise on homosexuality and moral failure among well-known Christian leaders have all contributed to this tragic situation.”

Is the situation in the United States any better? Despite the inscription on every US coin stating “In God we Trust” the US is in deep spiritual trouble and so are its churches. “The spiritual heritage of the USA is being steadily eroded—its loss would impoverish the world.” Johnstone identifies the attack on two major fronts:

1) *External*: An unholy alliance of minority rights groups such as humanism, homosexuals, New Age enthusiasts and pro-choice abortionists exploit the provisions of the constitution and control of the media to disparage and mock Christians and limit or remove anything Christian in public life. The aim is to replace ‘intolerant’ christian values with a permissive pagan culture...

2) *Internal*: The greater challenge is for commitment among Christians. Lack of it has had devastating consequences—a respect for the Bible without knowledge of or obedience to its contents and an interest in religion without a holiness to recommend it... Young people present one of the major areas of the spiritual battle today. The bitter fruits of humanistic philosophies are now being harvested in disorientation, spiritual vulnerability,

moral decay, rejection of authority, widespread drug abuse and mindless violence.<sup>6</sup>

In light of the moral erosion and the the spiritual decay in the West what needs to be done? What is the antidote to this problem which is not going away? Various answers have been proposed and most of us have heard them all. However, we

## MISSION ANTHROPOLOGISTS HAVE CONSISTENTLY WARNED US OF THE DANGERS OF SYNCRETISM ON THE MISSION FIELD, BUT FEW HAVE ALERTED US OF ITS DANGERS AT HOME.

must see that the answer lies deeper than most have proposed. One thing is sure, it has little to do with the world and what it has become, but everything to do with *who we are as Christians and what we have become.*

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It would be nice if we could blame someone (or something) other than ourselves for the decay of moral, spiritual and intellectual power in Church and Mission today. When all is said and done, we should see that “we have met the enemy and he is us!” We must also see that the process of the enemy becoming “us” did not happen in a vacuum nor overnight. A convincing case can be made that the lack of our moral, spiritual and intellectual power in Western Christianity is not a “loss of confidence problem” but is deeper—much deeper. It is a worldview problem. In the philosophical arena it is a metaphysical problem. The “unseen” forces that baffle us are often the forces that lay in the region of faulty assumptions we have made about what is ultimately true and real.

Scripture has prohibited the making of vows because a vow binds the conscience and an unfulfilled vow brings guilt and condemnation. Likewise, when we believe—when we really believe something to be true—it binds our conscience. It effectively binds the way we perceive reality which controls the way we live and behave. Worldviews, including our “theologies,” have this capacity to bind and control, and prevent us from seeing outside their boundaries. We then pass this on to our children, and our children’s children, etc.

There is no doubt that the 20th century birthed a non-christian worldview that has spawned a tornadic like whirlwind of non-Christian beliefs and paradigms in the form of scientific rationalism, secular humanism, materialism and consumerism, plus pluralism and its kissing cousin relativism where everything is true and nothing is true. These belief systems have become the bedrock of Western civilization and post-modern culture. It has birthed cultural nihilism as evidenced by the emotional, psychological and social fragmentation of the current generation at home in “mindless violence.”

### BACK TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

A good case can be made that we are failing in the West in our situation in much the same way that Israel failed in her situation in the Old Testament. The results of Israel’s failure were devastating, and so are ours. Also, we must see that their failure did not happen in a vacuum, nor did it happen overnight, and neither did ours.

The crisis Western Christianity faces today has a long history with roots going way back to a time before the modern era. As a matter of fact, (and it is indisputable) its roots lie in the Enlightenment and the Renaissance in Europe. But back further, it must be seen that the roots of these movements had its soil in the discovery of the Greek classics, i.e., Greek philosophy. From this soil emerged a radical new way

of looking at life and reality. This spawned a new worldview that became essentially empiricist, meaning that they saw life and all reality in terms of the observable, sensible and experimentable. This worldview, birthed some 500 years before Christ, began to eliminate the mythical, supernatural and sacred elements of life which were considered absurd, unnecessary and irrelevant. This same era birthed Israel's new life situation, i.e., the development of Judaism as a religion. As such, Israel's situation in the Old Testament is by no means dissimilar to the crisis Western Christianity faces today.<sup>7</sup>

## A Radical Worldview Conversion

In light of the above, it is my contention that Western Christianity stands in need of a worldview conversion, one that will deeply and radically change our way of life. As already alluded to, it will involve a twofold task, 1) the de-westernization of the Gospel—or getting rid of elements that are incompatible with the Bible, elements we have incorporated and adopted in the West as part of the Gospel, that we have been practising in Church and Mission, and sadly to say, we have exported to the world, and 2) a corresponding new perspective of what the Gospel truly is biblically speaking—what the message is in the classic sense of apostolic Christianity followed by living it—learning it to the degree that it becomes a consistent reality in our daily walk of life as God's People.

This process will not be easy. It will be a complex endeavor focused on changing basic assumptions, looking at hidden belief systems, dealing with the fundamentals of life and living and working as we know it. None of this will be easy. Looking at one's foundations, especially one's faith foundations, and in the process finding worldly and unbiblical elements, then owning up to this with the corresponding need of renouncing them, plus

learning new ways of living, in uncharted waters, will not be easy. It will entail sacrifice, pain, confusion and heartache on a "deep gut level."

But it is needed and in the end will be worth it. Just consider its opposite. Without a radical new way of seeing the world, seeing ourselves, and seeing our mission in the world, Christianity as a vital spiritual power in West will not likely survive. Although its institutions, buildings and rites will survive as they have in Europe, and peoples will still want to get married and buried as "Christians" etc., its power, life, truth, faith and spirit as Jesus revealed it will not. Christian institutions in the West will become relics (tombstones) of a by-gone era, like the relics of ancient (3rd and 4th century) Christianity in North Africa or Nestorian Christianity in China.

Personally we may make it into heaven. But what about our children and our grand children? What are their chances to be ready, like the five prudent virgins, and make it into the wedding feast with the Bridegroom who comes at midnight? (See Matt. 15:1-13) None of this is likely to happen *unless* Christianity in the West, and not just nominal Christianity, is de-westernized and corrected and rediscovers authentic apostolic Christianity.

The biblical warning is heard, "we perish for lack of vision"—it is a vision based upon the knowledge, life, wisdom and will of God without which we will perish. This is what will make us "complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16, 17). As such we will be able to fulfill God's mission entrusted to us in God's way, in His power and in His truth. But what will it take?

## COMPONENTS of A Biblical Worldview

Various components of the twofold task come to mind each pointing to the need of discovering a worldview that answers the ultimate questions of life, one that gives as true assumptions of our human reality that are fully aligned with

God's point of view. As we de-westernize the Gospel and recover a biblical worldview, we are looking at (1) developing a new Theology, strictly speaking giving us a more complete God-concept, (2) developing the primary reality of the spirit world, the angelic world called the Kingdom of Heaven, and by so doing giving us a Spirit World concept of our lives. It will also give us (3) a new and better Cosmology (one that is complete) concerning the origin and nature of reality, giving us a new universe concept. The twofold task will also give us (4) a new way of seeing mankind, human life, ourselves, our origin, our nature and our essential flaw, thereby giving us a new and correct Man Concept. We also (5) would discover and develop a deeper understanding of redemption and salvation, much broader than a mere personal individualized salvation, which would give us a proper Jesus and Salvation Concept. Out of that reality, and perhaps as we have never seen it before, will flow (6) a brand new Ecclesiology as well as (7) a new Mission Theology along with a better Mission Praxis. Mission's primary business is to plant the Church wherever it is not—among all the unreached of the world. But it must be a true and viable expression of the Church, it must be an expression of the Bride of Christ, stripped of its Western accretions, stripped of any and all incompatible elements of their own and other cultures, and so truly be the Church and Family of God.

In what remains of this article, I briefly explain a few main components that, as I see it, are absolutely indispensable to the twofold process of de-westernizing the Gospel, and its correlative, a recovery of biblical apostolic Christianity.

## A Complete Cosmology

First in line is the need for a comprehensive cosmology and cosmogony. The cosmology Christianity needs must be broad enough to encompass the total experience of mankind's existence, visible and

invisible reality, temporal and the eternal phenomena, natural and supernatural existence. Basic to a biblical cosmogony is the origin of all reality, visible and invisible, including angels, the universe, mankind, organic and inorganic reality, all of it fully aligned with the biblical view that all things came into being by means of the creative wisdom, power, word and act of God, who made it all out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) all of it as an outflow and stamped with His benevolent love and glory. A biblical cosmogony would insist that 1) the original creation as well as the creation of mankind (of conscious life) were creation acts out of nothing, i.e., when God created there was discontinuity with what preceded, and 2) that the first man Adam was created by God, that he was historic, and that Eve was made from Adam. This last point is the basis for the integrity and unity of the whole human race, all races and cultures included.<sup>8</sup>

### THE PRIMARY REALITY OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

A Christian cosmology cannot be complete, nor can it be classified as biblical, unless we include the primary reality of the invisible supernatural spirit world. We need the supernatural spirit world of the heaven of heavens, filled with the innumerable angelic hosts, and see it as primary to all physical and empirical existence. It is one thing to see the origin and nature of our physical observable and sensible universe—what exists out there, including our expanding universe now measured at 16.2 billion light years across—and quite another, to clearly see, with the same intensity and fervor, the supernatural reality of our existence, i.e., the primary and underlying reality of the spirit invisible world that permeates our existence everywhere.

In the West, have we adequately factored this invisible reality into our daily walk of life? Have we adequately reckoned with it in Mission, in the Church? I contend that in the West we have largely deleted this spiritual dimension from our

faith (although not necessarily in theory) despite the fact that the Bible is permeated with it. Most of us, I'm afraid, do not understand it, nor are we all that interested. Why? Because we have a Westernized conception of the Bible which has either deleted *en toto* all supernaturalism from our life (from our worldview), or see the supernatural as irrelevant.<sup>9</sup>

The consequences have been devastating. We have failed to see the spiritual nature of our lives and world, and worse we have undermined the problem of human evil and thus have communicated a less than satisfactory answer to the human dilemma. We have communicated this at home and abroad.

Even when we have owned up to evil, a major breakthrough in itself, we have failed to see the original inspiration of evil as consisting not primarily in man's nature—evil seen as something intrinsic to mankind. Evil must rather be seen as something external to us as human beings—as something abnormal. Evil primarily originates and exists outside of ourselves, i.e., as coming from and being inspired by fallen spirit supernatural beings in the spirit world.<sup>10</sup>

In the West we have missed this primary point all together. We have failed to reckon with the biblical facts, clearly revealed from Genesis to Revelation, that there is "enmity" within the human family, between men and nations, throughout human history, even between mother and daughter. This enmity, and here is where we have missed it, is more than man's inhumanity to man because it is not a "struggle against flesh and blood." The problem of evil in the world must not be reduced to what we see in the physical and visible plain of our lives. Rather the opposite is true. The Bible clearly says that we struggle not against "flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against rulers and authorities, against the powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realm." (Eph. 6:12). We must see this reality and factor it into our lives and human existence, we must see it fully and every-

where operating since the entrance of evil into our lives at the dawn of human history. And it all originated in the supernatural and primary reality of the spirit world.

### A BIBLICAL MAN CONCEPT

Perhaps there is nothing more essential to de-westernizing the Gospel and recovering a biblical worldview than a correct conception of who we are as human beings individually and socially. In the West our self and societal perceptions have been robbed of its true meaning due to the same forces and currents prevalent in Western culture. For instance, the Bible makes it clear—it is writ large on every page—that human beings, non-Christians included, need God for life in all its forms and contingencies. As human beings, we all need God for life, spiritual and physical life, social, psychological as well as cultural life. Biblically understood, all human beings, believers and unbelievers alike, get their life from God individually and socially, which means we only exist because of His life and goodness extended to us. Thus, if God were to withdraw His life in and towards us we (all human beings) would cease to exist.

This is to say that human life is impossible to possess and maintain without God—without God graciously and benevolently giving and extending it to us. This was true for mankind before the entrance of evil into the world, and is doubly true for mankind's life thereafter. This conception of our essential dependence on God, not just for eternal life as the redeemed of the Lord, is the bedrock foundation for a truly biblical conception of mankind, including all the nations of men. It all revolves around a proper God-revealed and Spirit-inspired concept of man, of the origin and nature of our life as being created in God's own image and likeness—living as it were and as it truly is by the breath of God Himself, which constitutes all of us as "living souls."

Hence our need as human beings, for all mankind, to be properly related to Him.

## THE DEVOUT LIFE AS OUR WAY OF LIFE

De-westernization of the Gospel and a recovery of a biblical worldview inherently implies, as seen above, living a life of devotion unto God for all who are His, who belong to His family. Our devotion unto God needs to be authentic and consistent, and needs to be obviously manifested on a daily basis, in worship, prayer, Christian behavior, service and work we do. We need to externalize in very obvious ways, for ourselves and others, the interior spiritual reality which makes us a "peculiar people and holy nation." Our life of devotion should be fully based on a biblical self-conception as human beings, who we are by virtue of our creation in Adam and who we have become by virtue of our recreation in Christ.

The peoples of the world we desire to reach, like the Muslim unreached peoples for instance, need to see this clearly in us. They think we are atheists or outright secularists because we never pray, at least they never see us pray. They see us as infidels. This needs to change and our behavior and daily practice need to demonstrate our devotion to God. It must be much more and totally different from mere empty rituals. Our devotion must arise out of our true spiritual identity as God's People, as His sons daughters, but obviously manifested in everything we do including set times of prayer and intercession, fastings and vigils, with rituals and ceremonies and spiritual disciplines if needed.

This "soft witness" needs to be the primary witness of our lives. This is the witness we must impart to the lost and unreached world. It is a life impregnated with true supernatural spirituality, one totally different and opposed from Western naturalism and secular humanism. The world needs to see the Gospel in our way of life, and be astonished at the devotion

and love to God and Him alone. This needs to be our core witness which becomes the main attraction for the lost and unreached of the world.<sup>11</sup> It is exactly what they are looking and waiting for—true spirituality lived out in everyday life by God's People, the Bride of Christ, who are totally in love with the Bridegroom of their souls.

We need to appropriate the essential and primary "top-line blessing" of the covenant that "God will be our God and we shall be His people." God needs to be totally and exclusively our God, nothing or no one else must take His place—we need to pursue and love Him alone. We must live this life of faith and love in God obviously (not just privately) expressed on a daily basis in everything we do, say and think—even in the way we dress. To the degree that this becomes a consistent way of life will we be able, and more willing than ever, to bless the nations of the earth, reach the remaining unreached peoples and finish the task that remains. May it become a reality and may it be soon!

## END NOTES

1. "Missions has recognized to varying degrees that it functions in dialogue with the religions of the world. Should the Christian attitude be one of superiority, confrontation, supplanting or of supplementing other faiths?" So asks one missiologist in "Convergence and Fragmentation in Evangelical Missiology," by Irving A. Whitt, a paper he presented to the Evangelical Missiological Society in Winnipeg, May 1999.
2. In the field of social anthropology and worldview proper the "I-thou" concept corresponds to the worldview universals "self and other." (See *Worldview* by Michael Kearney)
3. A missionary to the Masai nomadic people in Tanzania was so impacted by this process that he called it "Christianity rediscovered" and wrote a book about it entitled by that name. The book outlines the long and painful process of stripping Christianity of its Western cultural accretions. For the missionary it was a 17 year long disconcerting painful journey in which he "rediscovered Christianity." See Vincent Donovan's book *Christianity Rediscovered*.
4. See Dr. David Hesselgrave's comments on this important subject in his article "The Role of Culture in Communication" in *Perspectives Reader*, Third Edition 1999, page 392ff.
5. See Paul Hiebert's article "Cultural Differences and the Communication of the Gospel" pages 381-382 and Charles Kraft's article entitled "Culture, Worldview and Contextualization" page 390 both in *Perspectives Reader*, Third Edition, 1999

6. See Patrick Johnstone on the UK, in his *Operation World*, 1993 edition, page 557; on Canada page 151; on the USA page 564.
7. See article in this issue "Rediscovering the Sacred Myth" written by my wife, Judy Weerstra, an historical development of the worldview pillar of Western culture formed mainly on dualism. We cannot expect to minister effectively to the non-christian world religions without deeply understanding this background. But it is equally true for us today. We cannot expect to adequately understand ourselves, our Western culture, and the need for de-westernizing Christianity, without adequately understanding the historical development of the problem.
8. See *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, a Christian Worldview*, Vol. 2 "A Christian View of the Bible as Truth" page 136 where Schaeffer outlines these two non-negotiable absolute criteria for a biblical cosmogony.
9. In the West we have excluded the spirit world from our way of life because of our rationalistic and humanistic philosophy which forms the bedrock of Western life (of modernism as we know it). This philosophy deletes God and all supernatural existence from the equation of life. In modernism all other realities, even if such existed, are either deleted from our way of life, or are considered irrelevant. Modern-day man therefore lives without God and without the spirit world. Modern man, and much of Western Christianity, live purely in the natural world where he is the master of his own life, where man is the measure of all things.
10. See *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, a Christian Worldview*, Vol. 2 page 68ff where Schaeffer explains that we live in an abnormal world due to man's revolt against his Creator.
11. The reflexive mode of Genesis 12:3 that some versions of the Bible translate as "all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (which is a bit disturbing to most of us who know the rest of the Bible) has this essential meaning: The nations will bless themselves in the sense of desiring for themselves the blessing (of salvation and redemption) with which God's people are blessed, i.e., "God being their God and they being His people."

Photo here of Hans Weerstra

*Dr. Hans Weerstra is the editor of the IJFM. For some 20 years he served as a missionary in church planting among various tribal peoples of Southern Mexico. He and his wife*

*Judy have developed a study program on spiritual theology called Genesis Touch designed to develop a biblical worldview. You can reach the Weerstras by email. Address: <103121.2610@compuserve.com>*