

## Lecture 15

# Collapse of Colonialism, The Rise of Globalization

Our topic leans heavily on the book *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years*. There is certainly no value in my just repeating what is in those chapters. Rather, I would like to build up a larger context for that phenomenon—the phenomenon of the retreat of the West.

The West, of course, is a rather silly word, for what is west of what on the globe? Everything is west of something. We are talking about Western culture. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, there is what is called Western culture. Western culture is predominantly a Christianized phenomenon. It doesn't mean that Westerners are Christians, except in culture. It does mean that a Westerner is a person whose ethical judgments and philosophical, cosmological, worldview thinking, and so forth, have been predominantly the result, whether he knows it or not, of the Hellenistic tradition, which is non-Christian, the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the Western European Christian experience.

Eastern Christians are also Western in the larger sense of Western culture. In other words, Russians are part of the Western cultural tradition. When the Russians cross over into China, they are Westerners, even if they are living in Siberia or going into China. China is non-Western, because China in thinking and culture, at least prior to Mao Tse-tung, was for the most part unaffected by the West. Communism, however, is a Western phenomenon.

Westernization has taken place not only through missionary penetration of the provinces of China, but because every single card-carrying communist is a Westerner. His materialism derives from Christianity.

Christianity is the most materialistic of all known world religions. In fact, it has to be, because as some great theologian said, "God was the first materialist." He created the atoms, those shining, brilliant, unfath-

omable beauties that go together with the sub-atomic particles; and all this unbelievable complexity that is beyond our comprehension in its ultimate reality—God created all this!

All of this is based on God's wisdom, and it is the Christian who understands and is awed. The Christian does not worship it, but respects it and sees the glory of God in the handiwork which He has displayed for us: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Thus, the created world we have in common with communism. Many other things we have in common with communism. The ravages of communism across the world, as an atheistic, anti-religious system, are to a great extent just bizarre perversions of a Christian inheritance. The Bible itself is anti-religious! Read chapter 1 of Isaiah. Read chapter 23 of Matthew. Christianity is not even really a religion, according to some theologians, and when it becomes a religion, it may no longer be a faith.

Now, that is an overstatement. I do believe there are many religious people who are also profoundly Christian. But it is Christianity alone—Evangelicalism in particular—which allows for the acceptance of people who do not go through fancy rituals, and who are not beholden to any observable patterns. Even Evangelicals eventually fall into patterns, so that if you walk into the most highly unstructured Evangelical service, the people there can tell exactly what is coming next. So don't let people in non-liturgical traditions claim that they are non-liturgical in the ultimate sense.

But despite habit structures being what they are, the fact of the matter is that Christianity in a certain sense really isn't a religion. It is a faith, it is a life. It is, in this sense, the only candidate for a world faith. All other religions are religions. Even Christianity becomes a religion all too easily.

But Christianity is the only world religion in another sense. When people speak of world religions, they often only mean long-lasting religious systems. Any long-lasting religious system with lots of followers in any place is sometimes called a world religion. That's nonsense! To be a world religion you have to have, in some sense, an affinity with all the cultures of the world. There is no other good candidate for that description except Christianity and its extensive cultural diversity. Christianity is the religion (if you wish to call it that) which has been most willing to take upon itself the cultural clothes of every tradition.

Islam, by comparison, although in some ways a heretical variety of Christianity, is much more of a religion, in that it requires the Arabic language in its holy book. It requires facing towards Mecca when you pray. It requires many things to be the same wherever it goes. It is what the communists in Indonesia once called an imperialistic religion. The communists, before they fell from power in Indonesia some years ago, claimed that the Indonesians were dupes to accept a foreign religion.

But they were unable to pin that criticism on the Christians. The Christians had churches that were built in Indonesian architectural styles; their Bible was in Indonesian languages; their hymns and music partook, at least to some extent, of the Indonesian cultural tradition. In that sense, Christianity was nowhere near as foreign an invasion as Islam. And, by the way, Christianity got to Indonesia before Islam did! That is a very interesting thing. Islam is a relatively recent in Indonesia.

The Bahai religion is much too small a movement to be called a world religion, but it does to some extent follow Christianity in a multi-cultural approach. Their problem is their scriptures. Bahai people will tell you about their ineffable, ethereal scriptures, but they cannot be translated! I think that it is true: they are untranslatable! For when you translate them, no modern person with any sensitivity would go along with their bizarre and rather crude character. They have the same problem at that point as Islam. However, Muslims refuse to translate their scripture for the additional reason that they envision a global single language.

The point is that somehow there are many children of the Westernization process: communism is one of the children. It reflects faithfully many of the ethical concerns of Christianity. The ethical system which the

communist society espouses, but which it does not have the power to live up to, is for the most part Christian. Their emphasis on the equality of all people was borrowed directly from Christianity. Their cell structure, their emphasis on confession, all this was borrowed directly from Christianity. Their sense of history comes directly from Christianity. Communism is a bizarre, heretical, and virulent evil, but to a great extent it has been a part of Western Christianized civilization.

The process of Westernization produced an immense fertility of mind and industry, of political and demographic power. There is no example in human history, in the annals of mankind in any part of the world, of any other human movement gaining momentum so rapidly, building up population and wealth and power so rapidly, as you see in Western Europe. And that is precisely where the Bible was unleashed.

That power spilled over in many ugly ways, tragic ways, and also beneficial ways, all across the world. What earlier parallel is there of a vast muscular spill-over of population into another part of the world, as the modern colonial movement?

What about the Crusades? The colonial movement was, in fact similar in some ways to the Crusades. It was far less holy, far less Christian in most ways. But for most of its early history, under the Portuguese, Spanish, and French—before the Bible-pounding Protestants got into the act—colonization was definitely a Christian Crusade. All ships carried priests: missionaries with the intent to convert people to Christ as King.

When the Protestants got into the act, their first large-scale presence on the open seas was the pirates. That's right, the pirates were Protestants, and you can imagine how easily this fitted into the Catholic stereotype of Protestantism. Father Baegert, a missionary priest, in his book, *Observations in Lower California*, pointed out that Protestants actually ruled the Caribbean, meaning that pirates ruled the Caribbean, and why didn't they evangelize? Some of these pirates actually did have chapels in their outposts, in their hideaways. Some were religious men. With all their cut-throat piracy, they may have thought they were doing God's will.

However, in general, when Protestants got into the act, colonization no longer had a Christian dimension to it. For example, the Dutch were allowed into the ports of Japan even after Japan totally sealed itself off

from all other ships. The reason was that no one would have ever suspected the Dutch Protestants of bringing Christian missionaries. That is not quite true, however. The Dutch actually did bring chaplains with them to Taiwan. At one time there even was a fairly promising movement there. They also eventually did bring chaplains into Indonesia, the so-called Dutch East Indies. But, as I say, Protestants in general were less religious by far than other colonizing powers.

Notice that all this immense muscular outburst, whether you call it a crusade or not, to a great extent was a result of the explosion of a community produced by the limited tincture of Christian faith in Europe. When I read books written by secular scholars about the rise of Western civilization I just have to shake myself to realize that these authors are systematically omitting all of the Christian dimensions. I would read in Latourette about the Evangelical Awakening and its impact on the English parliament and everything else; and then I read a secular book with no reference of any kind to anything of that sort! It is just as if you're reading about two different worlds.

In fact, there was a great deal of vitality, of Christian devotion, of high-mindedness, of social reform, political reform in Western civilization and colonialism. The ending of slavery is one of the most obvious results of Christianity. Slavery was not something invented by Christians. In fact, to this date in history, there have been far more white people enslaved by white people, than black people enslaved by white people. Who are the Slavs? They are the quarry from which human slaves were gained for centuries and centuries, for over a millennium, the greatest source of human slaves sold into Africa. Slavery, therefore, was not caused by Christianity; slavery was there before Christianity ever arrived. Christianity was what eventually percolated into the higher circles and, through John Wesley and the Evangelical Awakening, into the lives of Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. Clapham was a district of London where these Evangelicals lived. They were called a sect, although they were really only a subordinate party in Parliament. They were the ones who led the anti-slavery movement.

The impact of Christianity on the rise of Western civilization, virtually unknown and undetectable in secular books, also accounted for the vitality and the military power of the West. It is a strange thing that the very muscle wielded by the Crusaders in cutting off people's

heads was muscle produced by Christianity. Christianity makes people healthy. It turns "the hearts of the fathers to the children." There is a lower infant mortality instantly when a population becomes Christian. There are all kinds of good things that happen: orphanages and hospitals, insane asylums. All kinds of problems are ameliorated because of Christianity. All that produces power, even for those who do not acknowledge it, and eventually spills over across all the world.

But the impact can either be called colonialism (with an adverse twang to the word), or it can be called a blessing. I don't know of any clear-thinking member of a former colonial country who will not be able to tell you how ambivalent their people are about the former colonial presence. Many people in India today, if they had their choice, would ask the British back. Of course, they would probably have to think twice! There would be lots of people who would be opposed to it. And there would probably be a lot of violence.

It is incredible that any one country would rule another country. Allan Moorehead wrote a book on the South Pacific called *The Fatal Impact*, and describes it as literally fatal to thousands of people, as slave ships and European diseases captured or killed off those people. It was fatal in other ways, since their cultures were largely destroyed.

The point is that, at some point in history, the vast, massive and, for most observers, utterly irreversible movement out across the world all of a sudden began to crumble and retreat—after four hundred years of massive, muscular, irreversible outreach, controlling every square foot of the world!

So we have this amazing and unexpected collapse of colonial power. I will not say that I don't think that there is the slightest intrinsic virtue or superiority in Western man. I really do think that there is a great deal of superiority in Western culture insofar as it has been affected by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I will give not one millimeter of credit to any other source! It is Christ. Western nations can say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I!"

But I was sitting in a hotel room years ago talking to a Christian leader, John Gatu, from East Africa. He and I in a few minutes were to debate, before cameras, his widely criticized proposal for a moratorium on all mission work. He came up to my room in the hotel. It was his initiative to talk to me, hoping somehow that

we could avoid unnecessary conflict in our discussions. I'm sure after the debate he was completely satisfied with what I said, because I agreed that in his situation in Kenya a withdrawal of missionaries from authority was quite reasonable.

But there I was, talking to a man whose own people a few months earlier were involved in the Mau Mau uprising. If I were John Gatu, I would be very embarrassed at the thought that my people, the Kikuyu, were involved in the orgies and unbelievable atrocities of those Satanically-driven people. What I tried to tell him—yet what I couldn't easily convey—is that I was just as aware as he was of the orgies of brutality and bestiality among the tribal people of my own past.

Consider the Irish. They were originally headhunters. In their little boats they would go up the Irish Sea and suddenly besiege a little village thirty miles away and kill every man, woman and child. They would pile all the heads into their boats and return, almost sinking, hollow out those skulls, process them and drink out of those skulls. Irishmen were drinking out of skulls as late as the sixteenth century!

Who are we kidding? Satan is the god of this world. All peoples come from a background of satanically controlled cultures. There is no intrinsic merit in Western society apart from the direct and indirect impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Science itself is a result of the cosmology which is uniquely found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. You cannot be a scientist if you do not believe in the orderliness of nature. You cannot be a scientist if you are merely a Hellenistic philosopher. Plato believed in a pantheon of quarreling gods, whose quarrels decided whether it rained or didn't rain. You couldn't possibly have been a scientific observer of weather if you were a Plato. There is nothing about the Hellenistic tradition that would ever have allowed science to develop. The so-called Greek science, about which many books are written, is in a totally different category from Western science. The roots of the latter are the godly reflections of Christian people upon the orderliness and beauty of a creation which God designed.

However, there came a time when God obviously said "time's up" for Western political power. The crumbling of that vast world-wide empire is the story of the "Retreat of the West." However, the retreat of the West is actually only the retreat of political and military power.

It is not a retreat of the cultural or economic power, or the retreat of the religious influence of the West.

Many people assumed, and maybe many hoped, that with the withdrawal of the troops and the colonial offices of the Western powers, they would have taken with them all other influences. But, as you'll see in the chapters of my book, in many cases the cultural impact of the West actually escalated in the absence of the often stuffy, censorious, and condescending colonial rulers.

The other important thing in this whole story is that in most cases the gospel of Jesus Christ actually was given freer reign with the Retreat of the West. It was not the gospel that retreated! *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years* book is simply the story of the unbelievable fact that the church of Jesus Christ emerged from this twenty-five-year period of Western retreat more powerful, stronger, more rooted, more indigenous than ever before!

At this point our dual topic, from colonialism to globalization, can be seen not as two different eras but as a very long and gradual transition in which both are present at all times. The end of the "25 Unbelievable Years" is described in that book as the end of only certain externalities, the outward clothing. The inner dynamic of the impact of the West did not decline at all, and is now the major driving force in the entire globe.

Globalization also is not new, except in its extent and rapidity. For thousands of years goods from one part of the world have been traded for goods from other parts. All that has happened is, seemingly, that the process has been astoundingly speeded up. Interdependence has increased to the point that some are suggesting that the main reason China will not literally conquer the USA is due to the industrial and commercial interdependence of the two countries. Frankly, that may be the opposite. When the Gothic tribal peoples had learned the art of war by mustering in and out of the Roman legions, it simply made them both willing as well as able to overrun the Western Roman capital of the city of Rome itself. The Empire never again regained it.

A recent book proclaims that the world is now "flat." That is, there is a level playing field and small businesses in one place must contend with huge industries thousands of miles away. (On that score it is just as much a smaller world as a flat world). The book gives an example of workers in Egypt losing their jobs.

The work they used to do is now suddenly taken away from them by more efficient processes in China. Lantern makers of Cairo used to work months in advance to pile up stock for the moment when the Islamic year made carrying around hand lanterns the thing to do. Now those millions of lanterns are made in China and shipped to Egypt at a lower cost.

The thousands of Egyptians left without work are not less willing or less able to work. They simply cannot compete with Chinese efficiency. They have been made poor through no fault of their own but because of sweeping improvements in global communication and manufacturing. Neither is it due to people in China trying to harm them. The Chinese workers are simply trying to make things that the world will buy, so they then can buy things other countries of the world make.

Another example is that after 9/11 travesty in New York, the first two million miniature American flags sold in the USA were made in China!

For centuries, but more gradually, what is called technological unemployment has been taking place as hand looms gave way to textile mills, and subsistence farming gave way to mechanized farming. Today the transitions are blindingly swift and millions upon millions of people in the so-called Two-thirds World are suddenly without work. At the same time smaller numbers do in fact have jobs as part of the global economy due to distant outsourcing—jobs that never existed before where they live.

Advanced globalization has obviously injected a new ingredient into the necessary strategy of Christian missions. That will have to await another lesson.

