

# How Do Cultures Really Change? A Challenge to the Conventional Culture Wisdom: Part 2

by William Bjoraker

The first part of my article on the missiological merits of James Davison Hunter's recent book, *To Change the World*, appeared in the previous issue of IJFM (28:1, January–March 2011). As we launch into this second part, let's recall the overall logic of the two parts.

## *Reassessing Culture and Culture Change*

Hunter offers a bold reassessment of the “common view” of how Christianity changes culture. He claims that the conventional wisdom fails to explain how cultures really change. We looked at five historical examples that confound the conventional wisdom on culture change. Then we began to exegete Hunter's own explanation of “the real problem” by examining his seven propositions on the nature of culture. I list these propositions again since they provide a necessary preamble to Hunter's thesis of culture-change.

1. *Culture is a system of truth claims and moral obligations.*
2. *Culture is a product of history.*
3. *Culture is intrinsically dialectical.*
4. *Culture is a resource, and as such a form of power.*
5. *Cultural production and symbolic capital are stratified in a fairly rigid structure of “center” and “periphery”.*
6. *Culture is generated within networks.*
7. *Culture is neither autonomous nor fully coherent.*

We begin this second part by turning to his four propositions on culture-change, beginning with proposition #8. I have also added a further proposition of my own, which accounts for an aspect of culture change ignored in Hunter's thesis.

8. *Cultures change from the top down, rarely if ever from the bottom up.*
9. *Change is typically initiated by elites who are outside the centermost positions of prestige.*
10. *World-changing is most concentrated when the networks of elites and the institutions they lead overlap.*
11. *Cultures change, but rarely if ever without a fight.*

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*12. Social crises, catastrophes and the consequent trauma provide optimal conditions for maximal culture change. (Bjoraker)*

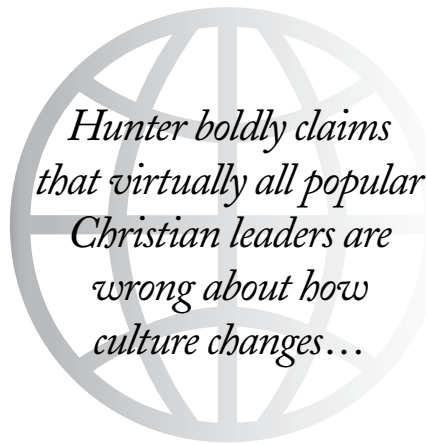
I will provide historical evidence and revisit previous examples from Part 1 to substantiate Hunter's view of culture change. We'll explore some missiological implications and finally suggest one example in mission praxis that seeks to apply Hunter's perspective. I also will try and provide some suggestions along the way on how we might use Hunter's perspective in cultures where we serve across the world. All page references, (p. \_\_) or (pp. \_\_), are to Hunter's book.

*Four Propositions on How Cultures Really Change*

*8. Cultures change from the top down, rarely if ever from the bottom up*  
Hunter states, "... the deepest and most enduring forms of cultural change nearly always occur from the top down." In other words, the work of world-making and world-changing are, by and large, the work of elites: gatekeepers." (p. 41). It is true that there are many economic, social and political movements which appear to occur from the "bottom up", but their ends are often limited and short-lived, unless "the top" embraces and implements the change. Political revolutions that succeed nearly always involve leadership from the ranks of marginal and disaffected elites who build new organizations. Though the impetus may come from populist agitation, it does not gain traction until it is embraced and propagated by elites. This is because capacity (*cultural production* and *symbolic capital*)<sup>1</sup> is not evenly distributed in a society, but is concentrated in certain institutions and among certain leadership groups who have lopsided access to the means of cultural production. In the fairly rigid structure of center and periphery explained in Hunter's Proposition #5, Hunter claims that culture-change happens largely via the elite "gatekeepers" at the center of cultural production.<sup>2</sup>

*Bjoraker's Comments:*

Here is where I would differ somewhat from Hunter. I think it clear that broad and lasting change will require reaching elites, but populist movements from the bottom-up should not be underestimated. When the bottom puts pressure on the top, if it is sufficiently strong and sustained, the top often responds and begins to change in the direction agitated for from the bottom. Change can begin in a number of locations in the society. The key is whether or not change reaches and is embraced by those with symbolic and cultural capital, those elites, networks, resources,



institutions and power structures that carry enough influence to be agents of systemic and structural change. Change can begin at the bottom, but it must finally become a wave that crests at the top, or it will just crash back to sea; here Hunter appears to be correct. But it is not entirely accurate for Hunter to claim "cultures change from the top down."

An example is the American Civil Rights movement of 1955–1968, led by Martin Luther King, Jr. In this case change did begin from a bottom-up populist movement.<sup>3</sup> True, it would not have succeeded in changing American society without President Lyndon Johnson embracing the cause and successfully getting a bill through Congress and signed into law as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Grassroots mobilization alone was not enough

to bring lasting culture change. It had to be embraced by the top for lasting change to occur. But, again, it is not accurate to simply say that the significant culture-change wrought by the Civil Rights movement was "from the top-down," though its final success required the top. So regarding this movement, Hunter is partly correct.

It may have been more accurate for Hunter to apply his Proposition #3 ("culture is intrinsically dialectical") to this perspective on the locus and direction of change. I'm suggesting a dialectic between the top and bottom... and the middle, and perhaps points in between. Though the systemic elements of culture are symbiotic, they're not symmetrical, not always rationally predictable or coherent. Culture is complex, often chaotic, filled with ironies and unintended consequences.

Fascinating examples of culture change are transpiring in the Middle East and the Arab world in the so-called "Arab Spring." As I write, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and more are experiencing political revolutions. Clearly these are populist revolutions and began mostly from the bottom-up catalyzed by Facebook and social networking technology (though those with access to this technology were not on the bottom of the bottom). In these revolutions, the top did not embrace the changes; the "top" was ousted. In the first two revolutions at least, the top leaders were faced with rejection by their own institutional power bases and were forced to resign. So the change movement was *de facto* embraced by elites near the top, if not the very top. To what degree whoever is now at "the top" implements the changes—"freedom and democracy" as advocated by the liberal forces the bottom—is still too early to tell as I write (August, 2011). But change is not happening from the top-down in these revolutions, as I understand Hunter to hold to be generally the case. And let us note that most revolutions end badly—the French (1789), the Russian (1917), the Chinese (1949)

producing worse tyranny and violence than the regimes they overthrow. But change culture they certainly did. The chaos in the current Libyan revolution is massive.

### The Case of Egypt

The current revolution in Egypt will be an interesting case study for this proposition. Readers may assess the predictive accuracy of Hunter's proposition and my analysis here one year, three, or five years out from this writing (August, 2011).<sup>4</sup> The euphoric and intoxicating rush toward a hoped-for democratic representative government by populist protesters without first carefully building the necessary democratic *institutions*—(a free press, free elections, a legislature with a healthy opposition that really stands a chance of coming to power, a judicial system not dictated by religious or ideological prejudices, effective rule of law enforcement) (Proposition #3)—makes it extremely likely that authoritarian power will win the day, trumping the *ideas* of freedom and democracy even if the majority aspire to them. Democracy is widely hailed but little understood by the people. Underlying the ability to create successful institutions and the kinds of institutions they create are the cultural values and practices that characterize a people. As Daniel Etounga-Manguelle said, "Culture is the mother; institutions are the children." Egypt has no cultural history of democracy or representative government (Proposition #2). They have only known pharaohs, kings, and autocrats. So, Egypt is now under the authoritarian rule of the Army.

Will modern Egypt emerge from this military dictatorship? What comes next?

If a power struggle between Islamists and the Army is the major contest, whichever of these two entities win, the result will be an autocracy. There are multiple parties, but largely two main camps—a broad constellation of liberals on the one hand, and the

**H**e contends that this model not only does not work, but it cannot work. On this basis, Christians cannot "change the world."

Islamists (esp. Muslim Brotherhood) on the other. Sharia law and democracy are incompatible. The Army may yield to the obligation they feel to the strong populism that ousted Mubarak, and facilitate free elections. If so, the top will have embraced the change coming from the bottom, and it could be lasting and society-wide. If not, it will be an instance in which a wave of change began at the bottom, but the changes advocated from the bottom did not crest at the top, so the wave crashes back to the sea. The Islamic organizations have a vast network of resources (Propositions #4, 6), and may vote themselves into power, and then make sure it is the first and last free election (just as Mubarak never held free elections). This is what Hamas did in Gaza in 2006, and what Hezbollah did in Lebanon in its *de facto* takeover in 2010.

If the populist movement fails, and autocracy again wins the day in Egypt, Hunter's Proposition #8 will be confirmed (at least in this instance), that lasting and society-wide culture change must come from the top-down. It will be simply a different kind of autocracy emerging—a shift from Mubarak's secular autocracy to an Islamist theocracy. Cultural differences do make a difference—the American Civil Rights movement changed society due to the presence of representative democratic institutions that emerged from a cultural history that values the rule of law and established institutions championing freedoms and rights. Egypt lacks both.

*Reflection Question: Can you observe any other top-down or bottom-up culture change in the society you are studying? What has catalyzed this? Explain the dynamics as best you can. How can change agents be most effective?*

### 9. Change is typically initiated by elites who are outside the centermost positions of prestige

Change is often initiated outside the centermost positions. When change is initiated in the center, it typically comes from outside of the center's nucleus. Innovation moves from elites and their institutions to the general population, but from elites who do not necessarily occupy the highest echelons of prestige, who are not the top gatekeepers. Hunter agrees with Italian social theorist Vilfredo Pareto, who argues that elites are either "foxes" or "lions" (p. 43). Lions are the leading gatekeepers who defend the stability of the *status quo*. Foxes are those who innovate, who experiment and take risks for change. Foxes are usually second tier elites, who challenge the authority of the lions. But it is difficult for foxes to maintain a stable social order, so the lions eventually win out. More interestingly, when the foxes win out, they become the new lions. There is a "circulation of elites" (Pareto's term), and foxes are both the primary change agents and the ones who arise to replace the new lions.

#### *Bjoraker's Comments:*

This proposition is an elaboration of Proposition #8, asserting that while cultures change from the top-down, it's the second-tier elites who play the critical role. One of the authors Hunter critiques is Andy Crouch, currently an editor-at-large for *Christianity Today Magazine* (pp. 27–31). Crouch responded to Hunter in an online *Christianity Today* article (Sept. 12, 2010). Following is a quote from Crouch's article:

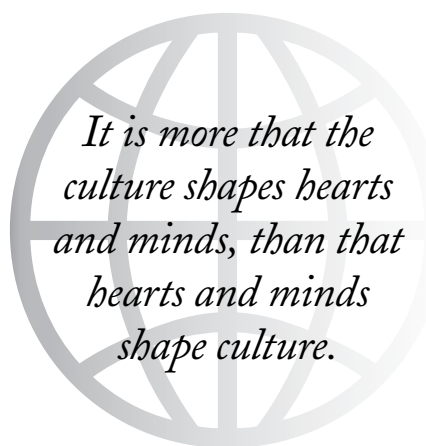
Hunter and I do have very different instincts on the role of cultural elites. Of course, by definition, elites have disproportionate influence on culture. That is how we know they are elites. Yet history is full of surprises,

not least the cultural reverberations from an apparently failed Messiah who spent most of his short career on the fringes of a colonial outpost where washed-up elites like Pontius Pilate were put out to pasture. And as I argue in the book ["Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling" (2008)], there are significant forms of culture making that can only happen at local scales, and they are out of reach of "cultural elites" precisely because of their local scale. The president of the Swarthmore-Rutledge Home & School Association shapes the culture of our children's elementary school in a way that Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, cannot. Indeed, a major function that elites like Duncan play in our society is to search the margins for creative models that they can implement more widely. During the health-care debate, a model of excellence invoked by all sides in Washington was the Cleveland Clinic. No disrespect intended, but: Cleveland! Does this not suggest that the language of "center" and "periphery" is too neat to be useful, at least in a complex society like the United States? (Crouch 2010)

Crouch makes a valid point. In complex, multicultural societies, there are just too many nodes or centers of tension, conflict, and overlapping disparate networks to be able to predict change as happening neatly—as either "top-down" or "bottom up." In peasant, or small-scale oral societies, this Proposition #9 has more applicability. But in spite of these caveats, Hunter provides a necessary corrective to the popular view that "grassroots" movements are *the key* to culture change. The metaphor of "grassroots" ("populism" in Hunter) implies connection to the top of the grass plants that grow from those roots, so faithfulness to the metaphor requires, by definition, that change reach the top. Local and peripheral movements may be one key to culture change, insufficient of themselves to change a society, except on a small scale. Such small-scale change in a

cultural enclave or sub-system can bring good, but is subject to the larger nation-state's hegemony.

*Reflection Question: If you are studying a peasant or small-scale oral society, contextualize this observation by doing some research to determine whether this may describe how change has taken place in that particular culture. For a larger, multicultural society like the United States or Brazil, your observations will face greater complexity.*



**10. World-changing is most concentrated when the networks of elites and the institutions they lead overlap**

The impetus for culture change, "for world-making and world-changing," is greatest where various forms of cultural, social, economic and often political resources overlap. "... when networks of elites in overlapping fields of culture and overlapping spheres of social life come together with their varied resources and act with common purpose, then cultures do change, and change profoundly" (p. 43). Persistence over time is essential; little of significance happens in three to five years. But when cultural and symbolic capital overlaps with *social capital* and *economic capital*, and in time with *political capital*, and when these various resources are directed toward shared ends, working in synergy, then, indeed, the world changes.

**Bjoraker's Comments:**

The maxim, "An idea whose time has come," captures this notion. An idea whose time has not come will have

insignificant consequences. But an idea whose time has come (*read: ideas that have converged with overlapping resources, money, knowledge; that are located within fields of cultural, social and political capital; that are operating near or in the institutions that are at the center of cultural production; all of which are moving toward a common purpose*) will have consequences.

Thus, ideas do have consequences in history, but not because they are inherently truthful, but rather because of the way they are embedded in powerful institutions, networks, interests and symbols. These factors—overlapping networks of leaders and overlapping resources, all operating near, or in, the central institutions of cultural production and in common purpose—are the conditions under which ideas finally have consequences.

**Analogies of Change**

This is one of Hunter's strongest propositions, so allow me to illustrate. A rough analogy of culture change according to this proposition would be the phenomenon of a flock of common starlings. Starling flocks of tens of thousands can hover in the sky, and then at a certain point in time, the whole flock can shift into various shapes. The analogy is imperfect since starlings do not have institutions and elites. But when the energy (resources) of the individual birds in the flock and the timing and direction of the starling flock's intended shift converge (overlaps), the whole flock changes configuration quickly. So also, a whole culture can quite quickly shift if and when these cultural forces overlap and align in common purpose.

Another analogy is the notion of a 'tipping point' found in Malcolm Gladwell's book.<sup>5</sup> Imagine for a moment someone making a stack of quarters (American 25 cent pieces) with each successive quarter slightly off center in the same direction. This will soon resemble the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The placing of which quarter will cause the tipping point? One more? Two more? Gladwell offers

examples of cultural products that passed a certain point in popularity in the market and then “tip.” He offers the example of “Hush Puppie” shoes, whose sales spread from a few downtown Manhattan hipster shops to every mall in America in the space of two years (2000:5). He also draws analogies to disease epidemics that “go viral.” And at certain times, under certain conditions, “ideas, products, messages and behaviors spread like viruses do” (2000:7). Under certain conditions there is rampant contagiousness, when one little causal factor can have dramatic effects.

The recent Tunisian Revolution of December 2010, which ended with the ouster of longtime president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011, is an example of forces in a society reaching a “tipping point.” Cultural forces were poised or in a dynamic state of tension such that it was ready to tip. Escalating protests and street demonstrations were sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor, whose outrage and despair over the confiscation of his produce cart drove him to this extreme act. Facebook and Twitter quickly connected and united these forces in networking power. The forces unleashed by this “tipping point” then spread to Egypt, ousting Mubarak and on to Libya, finally felling Gaddafi; and the consequences are still in process as I write.

*Reflection Question: Do a study of other societies in which a tipping point has been reached, when several overlapping dimensions of the culture converged to make this happen. How might one facilitate various networks and institutions to join forces to facilitate Kingdom of God “tipping point” culture change?*

### 11. Cultures change, but rarely if ever without a fight

Conflict is one of the permanent features of cultural change. Culture is terrain in which the boundaries between ideals, interests and power (and the structures and institutions in which

**I**ndividualism has severely weakened the influence of the Christian worldview, no matter how many may profess Christian faith.

they are embodied) are contested. Institutions and groups defend their understanding of the world against alternatives. The view and structure most desired and plausible to those who have the resources and power is the one that prevails and creates a hegemony (dominance). This is the phenomenon and process of social and political legitimation and delegitimation. Hunter states that legitimation never goes uncontested, that the struggle is never even, nor is it fair. For a dramatic example, think of the chaotic struggle that will play out in Libya for who will be the legitimate successors to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. Who, among the cluster of tribes, will be able to establish legitimacy with the people of the nation-state Libya?

#### *Bjoraker's Comments:*

Typically it is through different manifestations of conflict and contest that change in culture is forged. Challenges to the status quo must “articulate” with the social setting” (p.44), which means

An alternative vision of society... must resonate closely enough with the social environment that it then becomes plausible to the people. If it does not, the challenge will be seen as esoteric, eccentric, parochial, unrealistic, or irrelevant.

Leaders implement all intentional change. If the leaders lead too far out in front, they will not gain or retain a loyal following. If they are too close to the people, they are not leaders. There must be sociological connecting tissue, a level of bonding between leading elites and the masses, or elites will fail to be instrumental in bringing change to the broader society. This process always involves tension and conflict. Political elections are one means of the contest. But, describing how it works, Karl von Clausewitz said, “war is the continuation of politics by other means.”

*Reflection Question: What are the best ways to fight the battle for culture change within the people group or culture to which you are called? There are many options, so you need to choose your battle(s) wisely. Who are the effective leaders functioning? Why are they effective? How can you help your organization to network with those fighting necessary spiritual-cultural battles, and join forces as allies in a common campaign?*

#### *Bjoraker's Added Proposition on Culture Change:*

### 12. Social crises, catastrophes and the consequent trauma provide optimal conditions for maximal culture change

I think it vital to include a proposition that Hunter did not address—the important role of *liminality* in culture change (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “a threshold”). It’s defined as “a psychological, neurological, or metaphysical subjective state, conscious or unconscious, of being on the threshold of or between two different existential planes” (Oxford English Dictionary). The term has been used in anthropology to describe the state that exists during a *rite of passage*, the limbo condition when the old phase no longer exists and the new phase has not yet begun. During such extraordinary times, humans are in a more pliable, malleable state than during their ordinary lives. So these are times when individuals and societies can may readily change.

Crises in the form of social and natural catastrophes—such as war, disease epidemics, natural disasters and economic collapse—create a liminal state which motivates people to seek new answers, new ideas, and new resources that give meaning to cope with and prevail in the crisis and its traumatic effects. This is especially

true when the prevailing religion(s) and/or worldview fail to provide satisfactory explanation for the crisis, and do not provide meaning and comfort for the suffering. When they fail to provide the resources against destructive forces, new religions and worldview(s) may emerge or be adopted, or new social networks and institutions initiated. This is a *kairos* moment for change agents to step in, to facilitate change in Kingdom of God directions.

### *Crisis and Change in History*

Below I discuss a few historical examples of rapid culture change in response to crisis, catastrophe and trauma:

1. *The Growth of Christianity across the Roman Empire during major disease epidemics of the Second and Third Centuries A.D.* As a result of the first major epidemic, “the Plague of Galen” (165–69 AD), a quarter to a third of the population died. During the second (251 AD), five thousand people per day were reported to have died in the city of Rome alone. These diseases were apparently small pox or measles (undiagnosed at that time). Most importantly, during these epidemics the pagan gods were shown to be impotent in aiding the population; and the philosophers had no answers. In contrast, Christianity provided *superior explanations* (The Fall, sin and Satan), *superior meaning* (suffering provides moral testing, sifting, and moral character formation), and *superior comfort* (eternal life in heaven awaits the departed). Christians demonstrated *superior sacrificial love, service and solidarity* in the face of suffering. Christians had a higher rate of survival from the epidemics than the



- pagans, due to their caring communities. People were impressed and drawn to the new religion and its practices. This resulted in remarkable growth of Christianity during these times and changed the culture of Europe (Stark 1996:73–90).
2. *The Window of Receptivity to the Gospel in Japan after World War II.* As a result of the disastrous calamity that befell the Japanese people in 1945, they gave up their faith in the emperor as a god. The emperor himself renounced his divinity, for it had failed to save them from the unspeakable horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Their worldview collapsed and introduced a period of liminality (roughly 1945–1950), a period in which there was a higher rate of Japanese turning to Christianity than ever before or since. Though the turn to Christianity did not continue, the Japanese did turn *en masse* from militarism and emperor worship to modern secularism; the culture had radically changed.
  3. *The American Civil Rights movement of 1955–1968.* The Civil Rights movement culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought radical

changes for African Americans. However these changes came out of a cauldron of crisis and trauma—the lynching and sufferings of the blacks in the South, the marches, the resistance to them, the political assassinations of the 1960s culminating in the martyrdom of Dr. King himself. All this was in the broader context of the trauma of the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement at home, the “generation gap,” the hip, drug, back-to-nature, rock music and counterculture movements. The “seismic sixties” brought culture change to America.

4. *The Terrorist Attacks of 9/11.* The catastrophic terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001 effected social, political and cultural change in ways too numerous to list or describe here, but for a sampling—the launching of two wars dramatically changed the lives of several nations, the creation of new institutions (e.g., The Department of Homeland Security), change in airport and domestic security systems, the soul-searching within the Islamic world as it seeks to come to terms with modernity, new polarizations of many kinds, and many films and songs emerging in popular culture. These comprise some of the changes in culture resulting from this national trauma.

*Reflection Question: How can you and your agency be ready to wisely step in with resources and use to full advantage any catastrophe or crisis among the people you are called to serve, such that you facilitate culture change toward Kingdom of God values? Anticipate crises, and prepare to use them for culture change.*

## *Evidence of Culture Change in History that Verifies the Twelve Propositions*

Hunter offers a brisk overview of key moments in Christian history and of the rise of the European Enlightenment and its various manifestations to provide empirical evidence for the propositions about culture and culture change (pp. 48–78). I summarize them here.

The numbers after the descriptions of the cultural change movements indicate which of the twelve the propositions that operated in the culture and culture change.

### *1. The Rise of Christianity as the Dominant Religious and Cultural Force in the Roman Empire in Just 300 Years*

This astounding transformation of culture moved from periphery to center, through networks, institutional network of the synagogues, utilizing resources like education, symbolic capital, and institutions in urban centers.<sup>6</sup> (#s 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10)

### *2. The Conversion of Barbarian Europe*

Through monastic networks and literacy, through propagating new truth claims and the Christian worldview, through top-down conversion movements as kings and tribal chieftains led their tribes, networks, and entire peoples to Faith, most often through the resources of overlapping elites. (#s 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

### *3. The Carolingian Renaissance*

Through overlapping networks of cultural resources, finance and education, and new application of the Christian Faith to learning, as happened through Charlemagne's court and schools. (#s 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10)

### *4. The Protestant Reformation*

Through networks of urban elites (like university professors), with their intellectual and cultural capital, forming new institutions, and overlapping networks, drawing from the wealth of resources they brought

**T***he key actor or force in history is not individual genius but rather the networks and the new institutions that are created out of those networks.*

with them—intellectual, institutional, administrative, financial, political—all in common cause. (#s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

### *5. Successor Movements: Awakenings, Anti-Slavery Reform and Revivals*

The “First Great Awakening” gained momentum through transatlantic networking, by leaders with elite educations, and through the synergy of overlapping resources. The anti-slavery movement in Great Britain emerged through elite networks (the “Clapham Sect” that included British MP William Wilberforce) that had access to powerful institutions like the British government. (#s 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10)

### *6. Beyond Christianity*

The European Enlightenment (eighteenth century) involved intellectual resources, networking, and the symbolic capital of elites and new institutions. European Socialism (1864–1914) involved networks of disaffected elites, drawing heavily on the institutions and resources of the society they hoped to overthrow (e.g. newspapers that Marx utilized). World War I brought catastrophe, out of which Marxist-Leninist communism came to dominate Russia. (#s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

Hunter, making a strong case from history, concludes, “The alternative view of cultural change that assigns roles not only to ideas but also to elites, networks, technology, and new institutions, provides a much better account of the growth in plausibility and popularity of these important cultural developments. This is the evidence of history that change in culture does not occur when there is [merely] change in the beliefs and values in the hearts and minds of ordinary people or in the

creation of mere artifacts.” (bracketed word mine).<sup>7</sup>

## *Revisiting the Five Examples (from Part 1) that Belie Conventional Culture Wisdom*

We return now to the examples cited by Hunter at the beginning of this article (in Part 1),<sup>8</sup> that belie “the common view of culture change,” namely, that the beliefs in the minds of the majority of ordinary individuals in a society change the culture of the society in line with those beliefs. Why do minorities have disproportionate influence on culture? I will state the example and then offer my commentary based on Hunter's alternative view of culture and culture change:

### *1. Christian Faith*

Given the strong Christian heritage in the USA, and that most Americans admit faith in God, why are Christian ideas not more influential in the society?

The Christian worldview is too often reduced to an intellectual belief system (idealism) that does not penetrate deeply enough to shape the moral character of the broader culture and its institutions. The Christian Faith does not have enough leverage in the most influential centers of cultural production and does not carry enough symbolic capital to influence elite academic institutions, law schools, public policy think tanks, magazines and journals, the arts, popular music, television and film. An element of pietism and individualism contribute to this lack of influence. The level of elite cultural capital, networking power, institutional control at the centers of influence, and media leverage that was operational and culturally hegemonic during the Protestant Reformation and early America does not exist for American evangelicalism today.

### 2. *The American Jewish Community*

Why has this small minority group had influence quite disproportionate to its size?

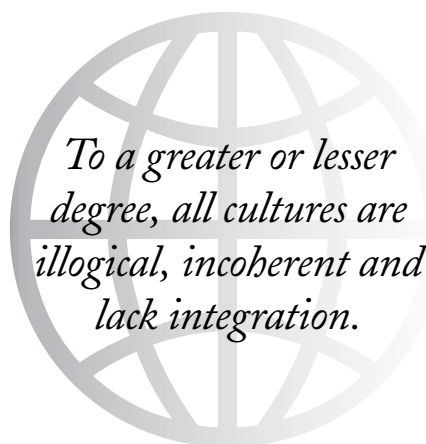
The American Jewish community does have leverage in many influential centers of cultural production, carry enough cultural capital to influence elite academic institutions, law schools, public policy think tanks, magazines and journals, the arts, popular music, television and film. One thinks of Steven Spielberg in film, the many Jewish lawyers and writers, entertainment industry leaders and of financiers like the last two Federal Reserve Board chairmen, Allan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke. Suffice it to say that this Jewish community holds the highest percentage of Nobel prize winners of any ethnic group, though they comprise only .01% of the human race Jewish communities are strong in culture producing centers, like New York and Los Angeles (whereas evangelical centers are in places like Colorado Springs and Orlando).

### 3. *The Gay Community and the Gay Rights Movement*

How does such a small minority have such great influence?

The Gay community and homosexual rights movement draw on major worldview themes in the American national character—freedom, utilitarian individualism and expressive individualism—for their cause. They have succeeded in equating their cause with the American values of freedom and equal rights, which then draws liberal academic institutions to champion their cause. Their cultural networks have succeeded in leveraging influential centers of cultural production, especially in the media, education and the entertainment industry, which then provide accumulated economic, social and symbolic capital, access to the “gatekeepers” and the reality-defining institutions of society They have been arguably more effective than any other group

in using the arts and entertainment and media to gain acceptance for their agenda. Think of the different television series—“Ellen,” “Will & Grace,” “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” the “L-Word.” There is now little public space to raise moral concerns about this movement; those who do are labeled “homophobic.” They have swayed public opinion, such that the Biblical view of sexuality and marriage has lost its cultural hegemony. The Gay rights agenda has won broad support and sympathy to their values and ideas because they have embedded them in powerful institutions among elites with resources and



social power. Their skills in changing culture have been formidable.

### 4. *Darwinism is Still the Official Creed in US Public Schools*

Given a near even demographic split between those who believe Darwinism (macro-evolution) is supported by the evidence and those who did not, why doesn't the public schools' curriculum reflect both views: Creation and Evolution?

Naturalism pervades the establishment view as to what constitutes pure and true “science” and this view holds powerful influence over the educational institutions. Teachers unions like the National Education Association (NEA) have institutional leverage. There are vested interests in promoting Darwinian views, not only in individuals' jobs, but in biology text

book companies. Here is an example of where powerful elites and institutions trump good and truthful ideas. This is less a battle of ideas and more a battle of interests.

### 5. *Abortion on Demand*

Pew Forum surveys said only 15% of the population hold that abortion should be always legal, and 50% said only in some circumstances should it be legal. Why don't laws and policies reflect majority opinion on this matter?

There are real similarities between the abortion rights movement and the Gay rights movement. Abortion rights activists draw upon the major worldview themes of the American national character—utilitarian individualism and expressive individualism. Through effective use of media—using euphemisms like “reproductive freedom,” “the right to choose,” and “a woman's right to her own body,” that resonate with freedom themes—they have succeeded to equate their cause with that of freedom and rights. They have influenced the views of the “gatekeepers” of social opinion; liberal academic institutions and powerful elites champion their cause of “freedom of choice.” The ruling of the Supreme Court in *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973, which made abortion on demand the law of the land, demonstrates that good and true ideas of the majority may not win out. Institutions, elites, and resources trump the ideas of the majority of individuals.

### *Missiological Implications and Applications*

So, we return to that basic question at the top of this two-part article—*How do cultures really change?* What can we learn from a great sociologist about missiology? Hunter has provided a provocative theory of how cultures really change. How might his insights assist a Kingdom minded missiology today? *How might we facilitate culture change toward Kingdom of God values and shalom?* I will suggest



several directions in light of the twelve propositions of this study (numbered after each point):

*Cultivate Humility in Our Rhetoric, Expectations and Efforts to Engineer the Transformation of Culture*

The word “transformation” is used copiously today and many books have been written on the theme. Are we overusing and cheapening the word? Certainly not in our vision, aspirations and prayers to change the world. But in the results we claim, I believe many of us are hollowing out the word. Are we as individuals and churches assuming and claiming to be more effective as agents in engineering culture change than is warranted? Doesn’t the dialectical nature of culture, the various and unequal loci of power in a culture, its relative incoherence, the relative strength and weakness of ideas vs. economic forces, the often unintended consequences of cultural activity and change efforts— doesn’t this argue for us having a lot less ability to change a whole culture (society) than we might think? Hunter’s proposition #10 asserts that change “is most concentrated when networks of elites and the institution they lead overlap.” If this is the case, we must ask—how much can we arrange the overlapping? It is an extremely difficult challenge to engineer a “tipping point.” Research would suggest that only a *counter hegemonic movement that is culturally embedded can challenge the power of a reigning cultural hegemony in a society* (Howell & Paris 2011:132–137). A measure of humility and a period of taking stock may be in order, perhaps especially for Americans (I speak as one), who write most of the books on transformation.

*Persevere as a Church in Broad and Effective Change over Generations*

Holistic change in a culture requires developing and sustaining a counter-culture alternative that socializes children in the Biblical worldview and

practice communally, while remaining engaged in the society. It requires a proper understanding of “calling,” a response to the call of God to work in all the spheres of culture. Cultural “tipping points” do come. But many cultural changes come unintended by the church and often blindsides her. Intentional culture change takes a visionary, proactive, persistent, countercultural push that is widely networked and resourced and produces a movement. It may take centuries. The growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire took three centuries for it to change the culture. Why do we think we can change a society in a few years? And if the restraining forces resisting change in the broader culture are stronger than the forces driving change, tipping points do not come, and the efforts may not bring lasting culture change. Then also revitalization and renewal of positive changes is needed every generation. (Propositions #7, 10, 11)

*Develop a More Sophisticated Understanding of the Forms and Uses of Power in Culture*

All humans are implicated in power relations and the power structures of the world (except perhaps hermits, but even they are implicated by trying to escape it). Power is inescapable, ubiquitous and a universal social reality across all cultures. We are not only *homo sapiens*, we are *homo potens*, endowed with a measure of freedom, responsibility and power. As Hunter states, “human relations are inherently power relations” (p. 178). As a result of the Fall of Man, human need to shape nature and to manage the dangers and insecurities inherent in the world require expenditure of energy. That energy expended is an essential expression of power (pp. 177). Yet, because of differing capacities of humans to acquire resources and to influence the environment, power is inherently asymmetrical. Because power and power relations are inherent in our human existence in the world, how

the people of God engage the world always involves how they relate to power. Culture change always involves power.

This is where Hunter is surely correct to challenge a major thrust of the “neo-Anabaptist” thinking that holds “that the mark of true discipleship is to ‘accept powerlessness’” (p. 181). Hunter emphasizes, “*Only by narrowing an understanding of power to political or economic power can one imagine giving up power and becoming ‘powerless’*” (italics his) (p. 181). Anthropologically, we know that only by being completely isolated from the world and its resources could humans escape being implicated “in the exercise, exchange and contest of power” (p. 181). Since power is expressed through individuals, through social groups of every size and within every institution it is impossible to avoid or transcend power relations (p. 179). Everyone and every group has some power, even though they may be passive aggressive or practice non-violent resistance.

“Powerlessness” is thus a fiction. We may claim that the church is only an organic fellowship, or a spiritual community. But it is also an *institution*, and its members are part of overlapping communities and institutions in the real world of a body politic. Christians have served in the police and armed forces of their countries, in institutions involved with coercion and the use of force. This legitimate use of force is necessary in this fallen world order (See Romans 13:1–7). So the question is not between power and powerlessness, but rather—“*how will the church and its people use the power they have?*” (p. 184). Thus, every evangelical mission effort that thinks it can evade or avoid the realities of power is living in denial, and there will be unintended consequences of such effort—power will act upon those who think they are being “powerless.” Changing culture, therefore, certainly involves an

inherent dynamic of power.<sup>10</sup> And this power can be further specified as to its forms and uses.<sup>11</sup> But any effort to facilitate culture change must discern the dynamics of power in the keenest possible degree.<sup>12</sup> Evangelicals should focus on developing a morally counter-cultural hegemony, but one that is not coercive (unless one serves in a police or legitimate armed force serving state). The church should not rely heavily on politics to change culture, but rather on culture to change politics. (Propositions #3, 4, 5, 10)

### *Intensify Our Focus on Understanding and Developing Institutions*

Hunter's propositions encourage us to develop, maintain and transmit institutions, and in the case of those which are distorted and unjust, to penetrate and change them. Institutions can be abusive, but institutions *per se* are a good, integral and necessary part of any culture. We are *homo institutionalis*. The basic social structures of human interaction are institutions, embodying inherited structures, values and practices. Some are God-ordained: marriage and family (Genesis 2:18–24), civil authority or the state (Romans 13:1–7), the church and its leadership/ministry gifts (Ephesians). Though their shapes differ in various cultures, their moral forms are universal. They constitute the socially ordered grounding for human life, they infuse and transmit values, and they socialize children in the humanizing and identity-forming traditions of their people. Segments of late modern Western culture despise organized religion and distrust the constraints of all institutions. We must amend this attitude and rightly respect the role of institutions, and figure them into our studies and efforts in international development and culture change.<sup>13</sup> (Propositions #2, 3)

### *Develop and Maximize Networks of All Kinds*

Hunter's propositions assert that facilitating overlapping networks' efforts in common cause will bring effec-

tive change. We are *homo reciprocans*. Reciprocity is an inherent motivation in the social nature of humans. The discussion above under "Evidence of Culture Change in History..." demonstrates that culture is generated and transmitted through networks, that the agency in culture change is not primarily the autonomous individual, as in "Great Man" theory.<sup>14</sup> The propensity in the West to think individualistically is deeply imprinted into our Western identities and education, at least since Descartes' "I think therefore I am." We write myriads of books about personal and individual transformation and self-help. We interpret the Bible individualistically, using singular pronouns in English translation when the original Hebrew and Greek have plural pronouns that embody a richer corporate solidarity, affirming human life-in-community. Overlapping networks produce a synergy in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We need to continually cultivate communal and network thinking and doing.<sup>15</sup> (Propositions #3, 6)

### *Strategize to Reach the Elites in a Society*

We cannot simply follow the pietistic tradition and focus exclusively on evangelism and church concerns. If we hope to change culture, we need to bring Biblical influence incarnationally (via human embodiment) into those segments of a culture that bear most influence on the society. Often the church has held the notion that belief that the more Christians we have in culture, the more society would become good and moral. Consequently, evangelism has been the focus of the church for many decades. But this premise is flawed. The more Christians there are in a society does not necessarily equate to a better culture. A case in point is Nigeria, where the majority profess to be Christians, but the nation suffers serious corruption. While not forgetting the poor and marginal-

ized, those with symbolic capital and cultural resources—the gatekeepers of a society—must be a strategic focus. (Propositions #4, 5, 8, 9)

### *Train Emerging Leaders to Aspire to Attain Gatekeeper Roles in Society*

We need disciples of Jesus who excel in their professions, who hold high offices, who produce culture, who win respect and honor in their fields, who thus earn the right to be heard among their peers in those fields, who create wealth and wisely invest it in the Kingdom of God. We need to win university students, and challenge our young people to acquire the best educations they can. If the church really wants to influence culture, we must equip those believers in the workplace and the professions and encourage young people to seek careers in areas of cultural influence. A major way to do this is to engage in the society and to produce culture—higher education, the arts, science, journalism, the legal and medical professions, good business practices and running for and holding public offices. Believers who enter these professions must understand they do so in response to a calling, and not as "just a job," a lower or lesser calling than "fulltime Christian ministry" in the traditional and pietistic sense. We must continue to amend this secular/sacred, lower/higher dualism. We should teach these callings are to be for the common good of the society and love of neighbor, not just instrumentally for ourselves in the church, or simply as an evangelistic strategy.<sup>16</sup> (Propositions #4, 5, 9)

### *Recover and Use the Power of Story*

Although Hunter does not discuss the use of story and the orality arts, I suggest it as an implication of his first two propositions. All humans are hard-wired for story. We are *homo narratologicus*. The postmodern shift in the West invites the recovery of the story all the more. Hunter's propositions have highlighted that culture is much more than a cognitive worldview. Two sayings carry the

import of this point—"Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes their laws" (Plato). And, "A picture is worth a thousand words; a story is worth a thousand pictures" (Anonymous). Stories reach us at all three levels of worldview (the cognitive, affective, and evaluative) in a way that abstract, propositional, analytical forms of knowledge delivery cannot. Therefore, any efforts that hope to bring worldview and culture change must utilize story.

The evangelical missions movement has used chronological Bible storying for years in reaching non-literate peoples and oral learners in the non-Western world. Often it was assumed that storying was only for primary oral cultures, but the postmodern turn in Western Culture is driving a storytelling revival. The video and digital age media have conditioned us, and brought changes in learning style preferences. Generationally, the Millennials, the Baby Busters/Gen Xers, and even many Baby Boomers now prefer to learn through spoken and visual means rather than through the printed word. We have been conditioned into a post-literate "second orality" by our iphones, ipods, ipads, YouTube, and the social networking media like Facebook.<sup>17</sup> Increasingly, Western literate people are hungering for the relational face-to-face communication of oral cultures that use stories, proverbs, songs, chants, drama, poetry, and other forms of communal and interactive events. There is a growing orality/story movement in the evangelical mission world, seeking to address this situation.<sup>18</sup> Although unrecognized by Hunter, intentional efforts to change culture will be facilitated greatly by the use of story. (Propositions #1, 2)

### *Implement Proactive and Compassionate Response Following Catastrophes and Crises*

Facilitating change towards Kingdom of God values is very opportune in societies experiencing liminal con-

ditions. After the dropping of the atomic bomb on the two cities of Japan in 1945, the worldview of the Japanese collapsed. General Douglas MacArthur called for Christian missionaries to come to Japan. Many heeded the call. There was a window of time (of several years) when the Japanese people were more receptive to the Gospel than they had ever been or have been since. When the catastrophes of war, earthquakes, and epidemics shake a people or nation, that is when they may turn receptive to the Gospel, and are malleable for worldview change. The devastating 9.0 earthquake that hit the east coast of Japan in March 2011 was just such a catastrophe. How can redemptive culture change be facilitated in its wake? We need to bring more than humanitarian aid; we need to be agencies that creatively plan for action that accelerates culture-change toward the Kingdom coming on earth as it is in Heaven. (Proposition #12)

Hunter's work challenges us to think deeply about human culture and how we can facilitate its change toward Kingdom of God values. Through the use of his analysis, we can work smarter, not necessarily harder (many work very hard already). We can see culture changed as an anticipatory sign of the coming consummation of that Kingdom, when all things shall be transformed anew.

### *An Illustration of Contemporary Mission for Holistic Culture Change*

Hunter is correct in his Proposition #10, that no matter how pietistic a church movement may be within a society, no matter how much evangelism it displays, it will not automatically lead to significant culture change. But in explicating this proposition in his "Essay II: Rethinking Power", he criticizes all political expressions of American Christianity, with their prevalent "politicization of nearly everything" and "the conflation

of the public with the political." He laments their "discourse of negation" and their ideological move to the right or left of the deeper "culture wars" (pp. 129–131).

But I contend that Hunter inappropriately levels this same charge against the "Reclaiming the 7 Mountains of Culture" movement ([www.reclaim7mountains.com/](http://www.reclaim7mountains.com/)). This mission movement illustrates the very elements Hunter claims in his proposition #10 are required for real and lasting culture change. This vision began with Loren Cunningham, founder of "Youth With a Mission" in 1975, and then converged with and was confirmed by Bill Bright, founder of "Campus Crusade for Christ," and Francis Schaeffer, Christian philosopher and founder of "L'Abri." Cunningham's testimony is worth quoting here.

It was August, 1975. My family and I were up in a little cabin in Colorado. And the Lord had given me that day a list of things I had never thought about before. He said "This is the way to reach America and nations for God." And [He said], "You have to see them like classrooms or like places that were already there, and go into them with those who are already working in those areas." And I call them 'mind-molders' or "spheres". I got the word "spheres" from II Corinthians 10 where Paul speaks in the New American Standard about the 'spheres' he had been called into. And with these spheres, there were seven of them, and I'll get to those in a moment.

But it was a little later that day, the ranger came up, and he said, 'There is a phone call for you back at the ranger's station.' So I went back down, about seven miles, and took the call. It was a mutual friend who said, 'Bill Bright and Vonnette are in Colorado at the same time as you are. Would you and Darlene come over and meet with them? They would love to meet with you.'

So we flew over to Boulder on a private plane of a friend of ours. And

as we came in and greeted each other, [we were friends for quite a while], and I was reaching for my yellow paper that I had written on the day before, he said, 'Loren, I want to show you what God has shown me!' And it was virtually the same list that God had given me the day before. Three weeks later, my wife Darlene had seen Dr. Francis Schaeffer on TV and he had the same list! And so I realized that this was for the body of Christ. (Cunningham 2007)

As a result of this vision, YWAM founded the "University of the Nations," with extension schools around the world, and has been training missionaries to the "seven mountains of culture" (cultural subsystems or "spheres"). It's important to note that what Hunter calls "institutions" in his technical sociological language, Cunningham and those following the "Reclaiming 7 Mountains" movement call "spheres" or, metaphorically, "mountains." The seven "spheres" or mountains, in alphabetical order, are Arts and Entertainment, Business, Education, Family, Government, Media and Religion. The mountain metaphor also resonates with Hunter's view that influence and power in a culture are embedded in networks of elites with resources in these commanding heights of culture and that for culture change to be lasting it must ultimately come from the top-down. This is clear in a video track that explains this movement's vision and rationale:

In every city of the world, an unseen battle rages for dominion over God's creation and the souls of people. This battle is fought on seven strategic fronts, looming like mountains over the culture to shape and influence its destiny. Over the years the church slowly retreated from its place of influence on these mountains leaving a void now filled with darkness. When we lose our influence, we lose the culture and when we lose the culture we fail to advance the Kingdom

of God. And now a generation stands in desperate need. It's time to fight for them and take back the mountains of influence. ... (Video, "Reclaiming the Seven Mountains of Culture" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQtB-AF41p8>) [note: the seven "mountains of influence" to which he refers are family, religion, education, government, business, media, arts and entertainment].

Hunter argues that the same failed logic of American Christian political involvement is at work in this movement, to wit—that America has been taken over by secularists, and that it is time to "take back the culture". This movement just wants to acquire political power and impose their version of America on the rest. He says "the same language of loss, disappointment, anger, antipathy, resentment and desire for conquest" motivates them (p. 131). He objects to the use of terms like "enemy," "attack," "reclaim their nations for Christ," "take back," "occupying and influencing spheres of power in our nations," and "advancing the kingdom of God."<sup>19</sup>

Since Hunter's Proposition #11 states that culture does not change without a fight, I wonder why he decries this language. And his use of this last phrase, "advancing the Kingdom of God", fails to fully appreciate what Messiah's Gospel of the Kingdom is about. The primary message of not only John the Baptist but of Jesus Himself was that that "Kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus' parables of the Kingdom are all about how the Kingdom of God is advancing through His ministry and continues by His followers throughout this Age, and until His Second Coming when the Kingdom is consummated.

I must respectfully disagree with Hunter's dismissal of this movement. I see that their efforts to reclaim the culture share the very logic of Hunter's propositions on culture change. You can hear it in

this quote by Os Hillman, one of "Marketplace Leaders":

For the last several decades the Church has operated from a belief that the more Christians we have in culture, the more society would become Christianized. Consequently, evangelism has been the focus of the Church for many decades. However, this premise is flawed. Research has proven that more Christians in a society do not necessarily equate to a better culture. Case in point is Nigeria. Some say that there more than 60% of the population is born-again, but this nation has serious corruption... If the church really wants to influence culture, we must equip those believers who operate on these mountains and encourage young people to seek careers in these areas. (Hillman 2011)

In sum, I affirm Hunter's Proposition #10, but I fault him for not endorsing a movement that resonates with his view of culture change. It's regrettable, for Hunter has given us a model for continuing to think deeply about human culture and how we can facilitate its change toward Kingdom of God values. His analysis helps us envision how culture changes, and how culture changes toward Kingdom values as an anticipatory sign of the coming consummation of that Kingdom, when all things shall be transformed anew.

#### *For Further Reflection and*

*Application: Do a historical study of other societies in which a cultural tipping point had been reached, when several overlapping dimensions of the culture converged to create a tipping point and made lasting change happen. Strategize and plan to facilitate various networks and institutions to join forces for Kingdom of God culture change in our time. IJFM*

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Proposition # 5 in Part One, "How Do Cultures Really Change? – A Challenge to the Conventional Culture Wisdom" by William Bjoraker, IJFM, 28:1, January–March, 2011, (p. 19).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> One can argue that this movement was indeed top-down by elites with networked resources because Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was part of an elite. He held a PhD and his associates in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were educated ministers. They were elites within the black community (affirming this Propo-

sition #8 at the black community level), but because they were black they were not at the "top" in terms of holding the power of symbolic and cultural capital in the whole of American national society and body politic. Virtually the whole African-American community was then on the bottom.

<sup>4</sup> Fareed Zakaria is guardedly optimistic of real culture change in Egypt. He reasons that the youth bulge (60% of the region's population is under 30), and the information technology connecting them, will create progress toward liberty and freedom, and an end to corruption and poverty. But will this idealistic youthful majority be enough? It has not been successful in Iran (Green Movement of 2009–2010) or China (Tiananmen Square, 1989). Zakaria's assessment seems to ignore Hunter's argument that good and moral ideas of the majority do not necessarily win out when other forces and configurations of cultural power may be too strong. ("The Generation Changing the World", *TIME Magazine*, February 2011 (pp. 28–31)

<sup>5</sup> "The Tipping Point: How Little Things can Make A Big Difference" (2000). This book draws from social science studies, and offers a wealth of examples from popular culture, more or less subject to other interpretive analyses, but a recommended resource for the study of culture change.

<sup>6</sup> Stark's research establishes that the early Christian movement was based in the middle and upper classes. "The early church was anything but a refuge for slaves and the impoverished masses" (1996:28). The apostle Paul knew Greek language and culture (the language of the center) gave him inroads to higher classes. Paul was intent on reaching Rome, the center of the Empire. Earlier Marxist-tinged deprivation theories that holding that the dispossessed masses constituted the Christian movement appear to be well refuted. Christianity was not a proletarian movement. There were Christians among the aristocracy, the senatorial class, and even in the imperial household who carried considerable prestige and social status. Most Christians were drawn from the literate classes; there were overlapping networks from "urban circles of well-situated artisans, merchants, and members of liberal professions" (1996:31–35). The church fathers were virtually all highly educated men, born into families of high social standing.

<sup>7</sup> From FaithfulPresence.com; the web site associated with Hunter's book,

under “Book Abstract,” entry under Essay 1, Chapter 5: [http://www.faithfulpresence.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=14&Itemid=19](http://www.faithfulpresence.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=14&Itemid=19)

<sup>8</sup> See “How Do Cultures Really Change? A Challenge to the Conventional Culture Wisdom” by William Bjoraker, *IJFM*, 28:1, January–March, 2011, pp. 15.

<sup>9</sup> This phrase comes John Howard Yoder, a major theologian and leader of the Neo-Anabaptist movement, in his work *The Politics of Jesus*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972:244.

<sup>10</sup> Generally three major categories of power are present in the human relations dimension of a culture: *coercive power*, *persuasive power*, and *hegemonic power* (Howell and Paris 2011: 132–136). Coercive power is the use of force, legitimate or illegitimate. Persuasive power is use of words, relationships and actions to influence others. Hegemonic power is the diffuse power of dominant ideas, values and practices embedded in networks, institutions, and interests in a society such that a particular complex of ideas and values holds the most influential sway in the culture. Only a counter hegemonic movement that is culturally embedded can challenge a reigning hegemony.

<sup>11</sup> See *Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses*, by Dennis H. Wrong, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

<sup>12</sup> Political scientists distinguish between “soft power” and “hard power.” Soft power is exercised symbolically and culturally (symbolic capital, influence, persuasion). Hard power is exercised through the technologies of force. Soft power is the power to define reality in a culture, the power to name things and describe their purpose, to define morality and ethics, what is acceptable and unacceptable. What is a family? What is legitimate

sexuality? What is worth living for and dying for? This power predisposes societies and individuals within them to action. Such power is ultimately greater than hard power (coercion, force). As the old saying goes, “The pen is mightier than the sword.”

<sup>13</sup> Recommended book on the values and purposes of socio-cultural institutions: *On Thinking Institutionally*, by Hugh Hecllo, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See “How Do Cultures Really Change? A Challenge to the Conventional Culture Wisdom” by William Bjoraker, *IJFM*, 28:1, January–March, 2011, under Proposition # 6, pp. 19.

<sup>15</sup> On individualism and collectivism and the American social DNA, see: *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, by Robert N. Bellah, Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1996. And for an advanced social science study, see: *Individualism and Collectivism*, by Harry Triandis, Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> On the Christian view of calling: *The Call*, by Os Guinness, Nashville, London, Vancouver, Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1998. Guinness deftly addresses “the Catholic distortion” of calling (a two-tiered secular/sacred; higher/lower dualism), and the Protestant distortion (severing the secular vocations from the spiritual, so that a “vocation” (literally “calling”) has become just a job. He distinguishes between the “primary call” (“by God, to God, for God”) from the secondary call (“Everyone, everywhere, in everything”) with its varied calls to work in all of life and culture. Every believer has both the primary calling and a secondary calling, the secondary being a response to the primary.

<sup>17</sup> Pink has argued that our moment in history is a time of “right brain rising.” To put very simply the argument of his book: “*Left brain direction*” (rational, mathematical, scientific, analysis, text-oriented, logical, linear, sequential, detail-oriented) was dominant during modernity. Left brain relates largely to the cognitive dimension of worldview. “*Right brain direction*” (artistic, aesthetic, emotional and relational expression, literary, synthesis, non-linear, context-oriented, big-picture, holistic, metaphor and story-oriented) is rising in postmodernity out of human hunger for its lack during modernity. Right brain relates largely to the affective and evaluative dimensions of worldview. Left brain direction remains necessary, but it is no longer sufficient. We need a “whole new mind,” a holistic mind (2006).

<sup>18</sup> See the whole issue devoted to “Orality” of the journal *Missiology*, Vol. XXXVIII, Number 2, April 2010. Also a fine practical treatment of the West and non-West by Avery T. Willis, Jr. and Mark Snowden, *Truth That Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in A Teflon World*, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> We can assume Hunter is speaking at the sociological level, in which case he is correct to criticize any language of hostility and warfare when aimed by individuals or groups at others. Surely we need greater civility in the public square, in our public discourse with “flesh and blood.” But we are in a protracted spiritual war between good and evil. Biblically, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers...” (Ephesians 6:12). Spiritual warfare talk among co-workers and in prayer concerts is appropriate, because Scripture uses the language of warfare for our engagement in these battles.