

THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGION

In chapter one, Charles E. Farhadian gives a perspective on world religions in relation to the religion of Christianity. He gives context regarding world religions by stating “We cannot understand religions without making sense of their broader psychological, social, cultural, historical, environmental, and religious contexts” (Farhadian, *Introducing World Religions*, p.1). Farhadian cites Winston King’s eight characteristics of religion which are 1) traditionalism; 2) Myth and Symbol; 3) Ideas of Salvation; 4) Sacred objects and places; 5) Sacred Actions; 6) Sacred writings; 7) Sacred community; and 8) Sacred experience. Winston King defines each term in the following way: “Traditionalism is the importance of the original creative act or words of the founder. Myth and symbol entails stories about origins carried in symbolic language, actions, or objects. Ideas about salvation involve saving people from something to a better reality. Sacred objects are set apart from other objects and things. Sacred actions are rituals that communicate with the divine or reality. Sacred writings are recorded words of the founder or early disciples. Sacred community gives a sense of belonging that provides structure and a place of worship. Sacred experience denote varieties of perceptions of transcendence or depth. Farhadian contends that these concepts are common in most world faiths. (Farhadian, p. 3).

The author states ‘religions promote salvation, liberation, and release’ (Farhadian, p.4). Farhadian gives a discourse on ‘Constructing Religion’ by referencing the founder of comparative religious study, Friedrich Max Muller, who was a philologist and professor of comparative theology. The author states Muller was influenced by Charles Darwin’s ‘Theory of Evolution.’ Farhadian does a comparative analysis of the psychological, social, cultural, environmental and historical contexts regarding world religions. Farhadian states “the history of religion gives us insight into the unique contribution that religion made at the time of its birth and how it was sustained through time” (Farhadian, p.21). Farhadian addresses ‘Theories of Religion’ and he cites the anthropologist Clifford Geertz regarding the influence of the following academicians; 1) Sigmund Freud in *Psychology and Religion*; 2) Emile Durkheim in *Sociology and Religion* and 3) Karl Marx in *Economic Theory and Religion*. All three men who were raised in religious homes were atheist most of their adult lives. The conclusion of the chapter discusses eastern religion such as ‘Shinto and discusses challenges in religion such as metaphysical monism and dualism and dualism.

Farhadian gives an excellent introduction to and comparative analysis of other world religions in and Christianity. It was important that the author cites John 1:1-5,14 and explains how Christianity is translatable. It was excellent and thought provoking to see symbols representing other religions and sacred quotes from other religions in the first chapter. It engages the reader and provides insight. In a twenty-first century context, it is important to engage millennials and youths with a worldview that reflects a global context. In my ministerial praxis, I will seek to engage youths by introducing a Christian Education curriculum which reflects a comparative analysis and study of world religions. Farhadian’s text book appears to be an excellent source of detailed analysis and information. I believe it will enhance the ability of our youths to engage in global outreach ministry.

