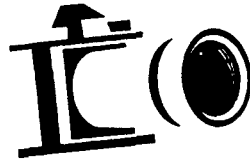


EDITORIAL



BROAD VISION, SHARP FOCUS

Conferences can be dangerous. Gifted speakers with successful ministries present their programme for church health. Around the room church leaders adjust their priorities - this must be what the Lord would have me do. Whether from inspiration or insecurity we are faced with pinball pastors - devoted Christian leaders ever changing direction, bouncing off the priorities of others.

Alongside these over-pressured good-intentioned leaders we also see the armchair evangelicals. Just as an armchair footballer always knows better than the players on the pitch, the armchair evangelical plays a canny game. Whatever any leader or church is doing well, there's sure to be an area of weakness. Armchair evangelicals don't build on strengths, they play to weaknesses. By always highlighting what others are not doing, they ignore what deserves admiration. Sometimes they are cynical - cynicism often festers in the failures of a naive idealism. Sometimes they just don't want to be stirred from their armchair's comfort.

Our convictions must be inclusive - Jesus' life and teaching leave no room for a single issue narrowness. But our ministries must have clear focus - too diffuse and we achieve too little. Jesus did not attempt to accomplish everything that could have been valuable; he concentrated on fulfilling the Father's specific purposes for his life (John 6:38). Since my own conversion I recognise a number of constructive trends and influences for me and for the church. Each could have dominated, but I am quite convinced they need to be integrated into a wider vision.

Doctrine

I was converted in a church which placed high value on biblical, reformed doctrine. And I remain grateful. But the mind and doctrine are not meant to become ends in themselves. Some Christians are full of teaching but lack all experience of witness and action. Some academic theologians are adept at responding of the questions of post-enlightenment philosophy, but are frankly ignorant of life today, in the churches and on the streets.

Spiritual Gifts

My personal discover of charismatic renewal was first biblical. Because I am a Bible believing Christian I became convinced of the need to be filled with the Spirit and the availability of all gifts today. Experience for me followed and was informed by doctrine. But some charismatics have little regard for biblical doctrine, engaging in an existentialism where subjective experience is all. The charismata were never meant to be the sum of Christian living.

Social Action

From the early seventies I have eagerly supported Tear Fund and calls for a simpler lifestyle. My wife and I experimented with a semi-vegetarian diet (until our children refused most of the beans and grains!) Long ago we cut down on aerosols. None of these actions is intrinsically wayward! They reflect the truth that our God is the creator and seeks justice. Evangelicals now readily endorse the need for both social care and action against injustice.

But I sense in some an over-reaction - British Christians' giving for work overseas is increasingly biased to aid at the expense of evangelism. Social action is indeed integral to mission, yet recently I have heard some evangelical leaders say "Social action is evangelism". Well it isn't. And if, in Tear Fund's old slogan, the poor can't eat

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Bibles, it is equally true that they can't be converted merely by eating bread.

Ecclesiology

Renewal has demanded a re-examination of the church. My own conviction is that Roland Allen will be seen increasingly as a prophet before his time not only for the church in the developing world but in the West too. We are living through a second reformation as we see the reconstitution of the church in the power of the Spirit. Where the first reformation centred on soteriology, the second, which springs from it, is centred on the doctrines of the Spirit and the Church.

In addition, the resurgence of evangelicalism has meant in all Protestant denominations new access to senior appointments. Church bureaucracies have always tended to be slow to reflect new trends in the churches. But now the evangelical tide is so strong that a due proportion of evangelicals in positions of denominational influence seems inevitable.

Here too are new opportunities yet real risks. Both these trends hold much in prospect, but neither, in themselves, will bring about the salvation of the world. We need not only to enquire about the structures of the church, we must **be** the church in action, however inadequately. We need not only to seek the appointment of evangelicals to high office, and then support them there - notably Derek Tidball this year - we need also to be ready to advise some leaders that this is **not** the place for their decisive contribution.

Counselling and Spirituality

The inward, reflective and listening gifts are being recovered. Evangelicals are increasingly involved in a range of subtle and sensitive counselling programmes, with a shrewd integration of secular and biblical insights. Likewise, especially through the influence of Richard Foster and Joyce Huggett, we are reclaiming and exploring the classical spiritual writers and disciplines.

And yet, even here, in areas so rich for emotional and spiritual wholeness, there is a risk: our wholeness is always provisional, our insight always partial, so self-discovery through counselling could consume every waking moment. Likewise, the monastic orders demonstrate that spiritual cultivation can be a preparation for action or a retreat into isolation, increasingly rarified and remote.

An Integrated Vision

I could go on. Worship and fellowship are two more obvious areas. Doubtless there are others you could add. Each of these areas throws up its own champions who speak of it as the area of ultimate Christian priority. But my point is plain - **each of these areas is vital, and we need all of them in an integrated, biblical vision for life and growth.**

An Unfinished Task

There is another priority for which the

articles in this issue by Eric Westwood and Harry Weatherley make necessary reading. **The central, fundamental, inescapable priority for the church is world evangelisation.** Do you believe it? Are you identifying with the calls to make this a decade of global mission?

Britain's contribution to world mission has been in decline throughout this century. Let this be the decade which turns the tide. Will you pledge to reach every home in your area with the gospel? How many are your church praying and planning to send overseas this decade? Are YOU ready to serve **anywhere** for the spread of the gospel? Will you take for the gospel the call to action of the Czech students in the 1989 uprising:

If not us, who?
If not now, when?

In all our failings, but in the power of the risen Christ, we urgently need to be churches and believers upon whom the words of the Great Commission are emblazoned indelibly. Why are we here? To complete an unfinished task. What is our task? **To reach the world for Christ.**

Rob Warner

MISSION IN BRAZIL & BRITAIN



Eric Westwood

(Missioner for the Northern Baptist Association and for the Cleveland churches of the Yorkshire Baptist Association).

For eighteen years Eric and Jean Westwood experiences first hand the vibrancy of Latin American Christians. When Eric took up his new appointment as a full time missioner he expressed great hopes: British Christians are recovering an appetite for mission. I asked him what lessons in evangelism we can learn from believers in Brazil.

1. Expect Growth

We must clearly identify and thoroughly explore the potential growth areas confronting us. What impressed me in Brazil was the constant stimulus to consider new opportunities for reaching out in the name of Christ. Where are the population increases and movements taking place? Where are the areas lacking the presence of the church and a dynamic presentation of the good news? Where would God have us go in his name?

Yes, sometimes we sceptical British reacted cautiously to the Brazilian pastor eagerly telling us of how many new churches his church had started over the last ten years, but we had to admire the vision, the commitment, the sacrifice and the evidence of new churches springing up on a regular basis.

We need to recapture the conviction that God intends his church to grow and that he has given us gifts that we might grow. Humbly but expectantly we must look for where he is opening opportunities for us to grow.

2. Take Risks

We must be ready to take risks in order to attempt great things for God! Not only our brothers and sisters in Brazil but also those in Africa and Asia testify to this venturesome aspect of faith.

We are often paralysed by caution. We want all our sums to add up, all the questions to have typewritten answers, all the guarantees of success, and then we will go forward "in faith". Yes it's possible to take unjustified risks; it's possible to get it wrong, to have to retrace, re-evaluate, but even the worldly-wise say "nothing ventured, nothing gained"!

If we are to see effective growth as we come up to the third millenium, in the racing tides of political, cultural and technological changes, we must be prepared to take some radical risks, holding fast only to that which is eternal and true. We may have to risk some of our proudly held independence to give and receive more from each other; to risk radical decisions about burdensome and often ill-situated buildings, with all their treasured memories, in order to seize new opportunities; to risk commitment to putting human resources into potential growth situations - and some will have to risk themselves to go!

3. Make Sacrifices

God has provided abundant resources, but we must release them with imagination and sacrifice for the missionary task. The Brazilians are exceedingly open about the cost to be paid, both in personal and financial terms, if the kingdom of God is to grow and churches are to be planted.

Brazilian church members are taught to tithe regularly to the local church and to further contribute sacrificially for national and overseas mission. Figures are regularly published to show what could be achieved if everyone gave a specified amount. Large resources are channelled into mission, future personnel needs are planned for and trained church planters are regularly placed in new situations.

Our present system, based very much on "holding the fort", often means that Home Mission, with all its generous support and hard-pressed staff, lacks the opportunity to be an "out the front" leader, and its resources depend on a fairly complex and time consuming process of receipt and allocation.

New church plants need ministerial involvement from the beginning and we need to develop a pattern for responding more immediately to situations which frequently develop rapidly. The stimulating rise of the

Oasis Trust among us shows that there are resources, both financial and human, once we define the opportunity and imaginatively prepare to seize it.

4. Plant Churches

I recently received a copy of the Parana Baptist Convention's report. "Project for planting churches". It's a brief blueprint for the churches of Parana, which begins with the assumption that it is the task of every church to seek to establish other churches. A strategy for a three year programme outlines the objectives to be defined, the steps to be taken, the resources to be involved, the activities to engage in, in order to achieve this end.

Fantasy? Fleshly? False premise? Or a burden born of the Spirit? If we are not to be left behind we must resolve our personal and corporate priorities as we respond to the Christ who risked all for his world. William Carey's zeal for mission has taken root in Latin America - the Parana call to church planting ends with his words: "It is not God's will that any should be lost, but that all should come to repentance".

MISSION 2,000

the Trumpet Call



Harry Weatherley

From an evangelistic point of view the 1980's were quite a decade. We were bombarded with a plethora of activities. Do you remember Mission England, Mission London, Livelink, Scotreach, Advance '87. Tell Wales, Action in Mission and Person to Person? You were probably involved in at least one of them. During the past ten years these events, and others more locally based, took up much of our time and energy, but we were blessed and encouraged by the results. A steady stream of converts came into our churches, and although we were stretched we all grew as a result. The feeling among many as the decade drew to a close was that all this evangelistic activity was very worthwhile, but perhaps it's time for a period of taking stock and consolidating the advances made.

We are not allowed the luxury of being laid-back leaders! Just in case you thought it was time to take things easy for a while and go off on that holiday in Acapulco, you are confronted with the fact that the 90's are going to herald an 'official' Decade of Evangelism. The Roman Catholics are promoting a world wide thrust of evangelisation in response to the call of Pope John Paul II for a new evangelisation. The Lambeth Conference called for the closing years of this millenium to be a decade of evangelism for each province and diocese of the Anglican

communion. The House Church Leaders have a similar vision into the next century. The Mission secretaries of the main Free churches believe that their denominations are open to participation in such a 'Decade of Evangelism'. From the first of January 1991, when the Decade proper begins, the major denominations are going to be looking for ways of working together, as well as separately, to promote joint activities in evangelism up to the year 2000 and beyond. The Roman Catholics have the avowed aim of making the world more Christian than not by Christmas Day 2000 A.D. That's no small target!

How do we react to this renewed emphasis on evangelism? How do we greet the prospect of redoubling our efforts? We could perhaps be excused for groaning inwardly and thinking; 'What! Again?' We could plead weariness of spirit or fatigue from being in the front line for so long. We could say that we are hard pressed and battle weary from struggling to keep the church at its present level. We might say that we have been down this road before. We could list a whole host of reasons why we should draw back from active involvement while still maintaining an 'active interest'. But can we evade our responsibilities so easily? Dare we shrug off the call to evangelise in so cavalier a fashion?

We cannot do so for a number of powerful reasons. There are vast numbers of people, perhaps more than 90% of the population of this country, who have little if any concept of life beyond the physical and material. We have created a society which has almost abandoned the idea of the spiritual needs of men and women. People have been seduced by the worship of mammon and they do not know that there is another God who loves them and yearns for their friendship.

There are forces at loose in the world which are clearly anti-Christian, whatever their defenders might say, and which are gathering momentum. Take the occult as an example. At the same time as the government's Bill on broadcasting is going through Parliament, a Bill which will effectively deny Christians access to T.V. and Radio, there is an advert for a new magazine on astrology being freely broadcast at peak times - a sign of things to come?

As political pressures increase, as long established social ties come under increasing attack, as forces in society seek to marginalise the church and minimise its message, who will sound the trumpet to warn? Who will call men and women out of the gathering darkness of this world into the light of Christ? Who will break the chains of the false teaching from the sects and the New Age movement, and proclaim love and liberty in the Lord? We who name the Name must do so. The mandate that Jesus gave his followers to be salt and light has not been revoked. If anything it has more urgency now than at any

time in the past. Paul puts his finger on it in 2 Corinthians 5:14; 'for Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all....' We are under a divine compulsion.

How then do we gird ourselves up for this task? We have to begin by taking time, perhaps we have to say making time, carving chunks out of our over-full filofaxes, to revive what for many of us have become the neglected disciplines of our discipleship. We have to rediscover the untapped power available to us in prayer. We have to pay closer attention to scripture study - acting upon the commands and instructions we receive. We must take up the cause of others and act on their behalf. We must be seen as men and women whose lives are holy and beyond reproach.

Undergirding all this is the need for a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit to fire us with love and zeal. As leaders there is a great need to re-order the priorities of our lives. How much time do we devote to God, and I choose the word 'devote' carefully? How much time do we spend indulging ourselves in 'harmless' pleasures and pursuits? The distinction gets a little blurred at times and the latter can quite easily overwhelm the former.

Many of us need to re-examine the structures of our ministries. Where can we best use the gifts with which we have been endowed? Have we the courage to weed out the inessentials in order to concentrate on the area God has set as a priority? And if we have been called to lead then we must not disobey God by refusing to exercise the gift.

There are more questions than answers in this article because each of us must respond to the challenge in the ways that are appropriate for us. But let us not close our eyes to the need or our ears to the call. There is a battle going on out there and the trumpet is calling us to join in the struggle. Onward Christian soldiers!



HOW TO HAVE A CRACKING CHRISTMAS



Steve Chalke

Eat Less, Pay More, Lose Pounds!

Question: When is a Christmas Cracker not a Christmas Cracker?

Answer: When it's an "Eat less-pay more" Temporary High Street Restaurant launched, managed and staffed by a Christian youth group and open for business throughout December. Its aim - to raise money for relief and development projects in India and other parts of the Third World and to act as the pilot for 'Christmas Unwrapped' - a major national initiative in local evangelism to be launched this year by Oasis and The Bible Society.

Christmas '89 saw a chain of 100 Christmas Cracker Restaurants opening up in disused shops throughout the UK. The concept was simple: A Christian youth group acquired the free use of a shop for the 3 weeks leading up to Christmas and turned it into a comfortable restaurant serving simple meals but charging the public as much as they wanted to pay for the privilege of eating there. The money raised would then be channelled to established Christian relief and development agencies working in the Third World via the "The Christmas Cracker Trust".

But the Christmas Cracker project was far more than that! It was also a three month teaching course designed to inspire youth groups by giving them a world-sized understanding of what being a Christian is all about. So Christmas Cracker gave Christian young people the chance to be part of a unique project which combined clear, relevant, down-to-earth biblical teaching about World Mission with the opportunity to do something about it.

Amusing ourselves to death

"We have too often mistakenly assumed that the best way to relate to young people is to provide them with various forms of entertainment," complains Tony Campolo. "We would do better if we invited our young people to accept the challenge to heroically change the world." This challenge needs to be more than verbal. Even the very best teaching, if it fails to give its hearers the opportunity to act on what it says can have a negative rather than positive effect. The Christmas Cracker was designed to give youth leaders and young people the opportunity to look at what God says about human responsibility for the whole world and then to do something positive about it.

So what's in a cracker?

Quite besides raising money for the use of Christians working in India and other parts of the Third World, the Christmas Cracker

made an impact in various other important ways.

1. It was Mother Theresa who pointed out that the world's problems can never be solved by people dipping into their pockets. It's time, energy and changed attitudes that are required. Band Aid and Comic Relief are both excellent projects but rely on passive giving and so can only create a shallow or superficial constituency. I buy the product and the money I give goes off to the Third World. My giving is neat, quick and painless. The Christmas Cracker gave the opportunity to thousands upon thousands of Christian young people to get involved. Cliff Richard commented, "These young people are giving more than their money, they've dug deeper than their pockets, they've given their time and energy for almost a year to make this project happen." Christmas Cracker offered Christian young people something to get their teeth into. It harnessed their energy, was worthy of their commitment and gave them the responsibility for which they hanker and are so often denied.

2. Christmas Cracker restaurants also gave the general public an opportunity to respond to the needs of the Third World in an imaginative way whilst at the same time identifying with the commitment that the young people of their town had made and giving them their support. Each restaurant had a minimum "stingy" price for the food and drinks it offered. There was then a second scale of prices described by the menu as "getting better", a third which bore the heading "better still" and a fourth "really generous" which gave the customer the opportunity to pay just as much as they chose to. In Watford, one couple paid £730 for a meal which they could have got away with £7.30 for! (And it wasn't a mistake on the cheque!) A man in Colchester paid £50 for a glass of water while someone in Frinton paid £35 for a bowl of soup and a BBC television presenter paid £12.50 for a mince pie. Our final national total for 1989 will be well over £500,000 (although an accurate figure is not yet possible as money is still coming in).

3. Many restaurants were run not by one youth group but by a whole number of churches from across the town. Church leaders from many towns have explained that the project succeeded in bringing the young people of the churches together in a way that they had never seen before. It was great to see Christians that had been isolated getting to know and respect one another. But because the teenagers involved were at school, work or college during the day time they delegated responsibility for running their restaurants to adults in the churches who were available at that time whilst they took over in the evenings and on Saturdays. So, not only did the project pull youth groups together but it also brought whole churches closer. It was great to see young and old working together and getting to know and trust each other.

Each Christmas Cracker restaurant also created an excellent evangelistic opportunity for the churches involved. As the "Eat less-pay more" message got around, the public poured into the restaurants and naturally started asking questions like, "I didn't know that young people went to church anymore?" "I used to go to church, I've often thought about going again is yours any good?" "So what do you believe anyway?" and 'If God's so good why doesn't He do something about all those starving kids?' A centrally printed Christmas Cracker brochure was placed on each table which briefly explained the history of the restaurants and why Christian young people were running them. Room was left for overprinting with details of local Christmas services and early reports indicate that hundreds of people accepted invitations to these events and have since been integrated into churches all over the country, many of them having already become Christians. Besides the specifically evangelistic opportunities the restaurants' created they also did the broader job of raising the profile of the Church in the towns involved. Many restaurants dominated local news with newspapers, radio stations and even regional television giving excellent coverage to what was going on.

5. Finally and slowly the national media also got a hold of the project. Besides the almost blanket national coverage on local ITV and BBC television news programmes we appeared on BBC1's "Newsround" twice and the BBC1 national news on December 17th where we were one of the headline stories! The following day restaurants across the country reported a huge upturn in takings. The project was also mentioned on ITV's "The Time, The Place" as well as on Simon Bate's Radio One Show. Sky television news covered the story and Radio 4's "Today" programme did a good feature on Thursday December 21st focusing in on a restaurant in Surrey. The Daily Telegraph and Sunday Mail also carried picture stories about the project.

Besides the 100 restaurants, there were over 300 other groups that took part in one day associated events. Many of the groups who wanted to be part of the project but could not get as high street shop opted to run a "Cracker Day" on Saturday 16th December. They invited the public into their church hall, village hall, school etc. to enjoy a simple meal and pay as much as they wanted to for it. All in all we estimate that over 20,000 teenagers became actively involved in running the project in one way or another.

What a tremendous success! In our next issue Steve will present Christmas Unwrapped, the ambitious evangelistic initiative for Christmas 1990. If you would like more information about Christmas Cracker Restaurants or how to become part of Christmas Unwrapped (1990) contact Pete Staley, Christmas Unwrapped, The Oasis Trust, Haddon Hall Baptist Church, Tower Bridge Road, London. SE1 4TR.

Worship and Culture (Part 1)

Rob Warner



Many churches today are enjoying the benefits of a twenty year long revitalisation of worship. And yet, all too often, today's flashpoints are rooted less in doctrinal issues than in the style and content of worship. It seems helpful to stand back from the activity of worship itself to try to understand the governing principles. This will not make conflict go away! But it may help clarify the essential issues involved.

1. THE INCARNATIONAL IMPERATIVE

A) Learning from "Africanisation"

The history of Christian mission worldwide tells not only of tremendous acts of self-sacrifice, but also, very often, of a confusion between the essentials of the gospel of Christ and the accretions of Westernised Christianity: whether in themselves good, bad or indifferent, these elements are not intrinsic to the missionary task, but so often it has proved very difficult to delineate the essentials from those things which add to the well being of the church, and from those which are ultimately neither here nor there.

In our own rapid cultural upheaval, we need to learn from those Christians who have explored these issues vigorously in recent years. Thus, I choose to draw on the papers of the Pan African Christian Assembly of 1976. Professor Mbiti noted that "evangelism must be related to the culture of the people concerned... We must take African culture very seriously in Christian evangelism and use all its tools for the glory of God - tools of language, art, drama, dance, music, symbols, world-views, technology, mass media...."

While the original Christianisation of Europe ran gravely syncretistic risks, we must recognise in Africa the converse failure where an alien culture becomes part of the "package deal" of conversion. As Michael Cassidy noted in his summary of one session at PACLA, "Being the people of God separated from their traditional culture and being the people of God within their culture were two very different things."

This classical problem was well summed up by Chuck Kraft who identified the ghettoisation of the Westernised Christian: "People of God within their culture are able to win others within the culture. People of God who are separated by Christianity from their traditional culture can only separate others from their culture as well, unless they learn a new way of witness."

Kraft called for clear sighted fresh enculturation: "I have nothing against those

who as part of their Christian devotion to God choose to follow God according to the patterns of Europeanised African culture. These are truly God's people.... But my heart yearns for the other 300 million... who will not Westernise in order to become Christian." (PACLA p85).

This crisis does not apply solely in post-colonial Africa, shaking off Western cultural tyranny and discovering its own forms for the gospel. There is a similar crisis here in the West: cultural values are changing fast, and leaving many local churches as outposts of a former age - time warps for the nostalgic and irrelevant to the contemporary. For too long, often quite unconsciously, converts have been pressed into conformity with arbitrary and irrelevant values and practices drawn from a former age. The essentials of the gospel always require fresh enculturation: the incarnational imperative is most important.

B) New Testament Worship

The concept of responsiveness to outsiders is hardly new. We see it in the Pauline principle of being "all things to all men". He draws on local religious practices and quotes Greek poets at the Areopagus; he avoids the Jewish terminology of "the Kingdom of God" and such messianic titles as would not be understood among Hellenistic pagans; he advises the Corinthians that their public worship must be disciplined by the needs and responses of the outsider: their use of tongues and prophecy is to be controlled not only by his guidelines for orderliness, but also by the predictable responses of the outsider (1 Cor. 14).

Likewise, at Pentecost, not as a conscious policy but as a spontaneous event, worship spills over into evangelism. Indeed, whether or not the Pentecostal tongues were different from the later glossolalia in the New Testament, we must note that tongues as a sign of the Spirit of Christ were a decisive evidence against the Judaizers - Samaritans and Gentiles speak in tongues just like the Jewish Christians, therefore, for Peter, there could be no denying Cornelius' new status. Similarly, at the Council of Jerusalem, the evidence of the Spirit at work among the Gentile converts without diminution was the ultimate refutation of any claim from the Jewish Christians for a cultural monopoly of the gospel. The Spirit's manifestations in worship left it beyond doubt that the Gentile believers were authentically Christian within a non-Jewish cultural context.

Hahn sums this up tersely - "Within the community of the faithful the new creation takes concrete, bodily form for the salvation of the world. Worship has by nature a missionary function. It is and remains open to all who do not believe." (Hahn p105). He also quotes the conclusion of Nagel: "Worship must take its shape from the apistos". In short, the incarnational imperative, is not some novelty of the post-colonial age, but it

is a principle, difficult, delicate and fraught with potential conflict, which we find embodied in the mission of the New Testament Church. It is also found in the history of mission - for example Hudson Taylor's attempts, pilloried at the time, to take the gospel to inland China in a Chinese form. Above all, of course, the incarnational imperative for our Christian life and worship is drawn from the example of Christ himself.

C) The Inevitability of Conflict

It is not pessimistic, let alone cynical to recognise that the incarnational imperative is a continuous process, never complete, and that therefore, in every age and context, it will produce a measure of conflict. Frank Colquhoun records the impatience of Isaac Watts with existing hymnody and the impatience of his father with any criticism of them: "The young Isaac - then a student, twenty years of age, training for the Dissenting ministry - complained about the wretched quality of the metrical psalms used in their worship that day. His father, who had probably heard the same sort of thing many times before, exclaimed somewhat impatiently, 'Then give us something better, young man!'" Fortunately he did. But some churches were never to consider singing them in Watts' lifetime. (Colquhoun p68).

One expert in hymnody, reviewing the latest publication, represented well the voice of eternal reaction - "vastly different.... very inferior.... and the more I examine the book, the more I dislike it and the more distressed I feel." The hymn book in question was not in fact the latest edition of Mission Praise, but a book that would now be seen as that ultimate bastion of safe traditionalism: Hymns Ancient and Modern!

Previous reaction against a cultural shift is also salutary when it seems that Christian history is turning full circle. Today, the organ is seen as a bastion of tradition, an integral part of what many would see as "proper" Christian worship. Not so a century ago, when the organ was seen to represent the radical and new, elbowing aside the traditional approach to local church music. Thomas Hardy's elegiac description of the displacement is worth recalling today, when the organ itself is experiencing a diminishing role.

"One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandmen by an isolated organist (often at first a barrel-organist) or harmonium player: and despite certain advantages in point of control and accomplishment which were, no doubt, secured by installing the single artist, the change has tended to stultify the professed aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings. Under the old plan, from half a dozen to ten full-grown players, in addition to the numerous more or less grown-up singers, were officially occupied with the Sunday routine,

and concerned in trying their best to make it an artistic outcome of the combined musical taste of the congregation. With a musical executive limited, as it mostly is limited now, to the parson's wife or daughter and the school-children, or to the school-teacher and the children, an important union of interests has disappeared.

The zest of these bygone instrumentalists must have been keen and staying, to take them, as it did, on foot every Sunday after a toilsome week through all weathers to the church, which often lay at a distance from their homes." (Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, 1896 preface).

We can conclude our consideration of the incarnational imperative with a simple and largely uncontentious proposition:

Living worship must relate to its present cultural context

2. OUR CULTURAL CONTEXT

a) TV

Such is the dominance of television as the shaping force of popular culture, no adequate understanding of the feel of our culture is possible without considering modern programming. It is instructive to compare a documentary or drama made today with one from the sixties. At that time, documentaries tended to have a much more linear feel: today, the theme is developed allusively, leaving gaps for the viewer to jump. Then, the documentary often presented an abstract thesis with visual accompaniment. Today, the general is told through the particular; almost all television tells a story, in which the issue or theme is experienced first hand. What's more, at one time, directors would show clips of someone leaving home, getting into a car, the journey etc. before starting the next theme. Today, directors can be confident that the viewer understands the medium, so that swift scene changes are possible, relying on the viewer to fill in the narrative gaps. This is exemplified in the multi-layered, interleaved narratives that made up an episode of Hill Street Blues.

Familiarity with the sophisticated conventions of modern television does not make for more, or less intelligent programmes, but it does make for a faster pace of programme, together, often, with a lower tolerance for abstract propositions and a shorter concentration span - the Six o'clock News is broken into accommodating morsels, as if it was built around advertising breaks.

We may sum up some of the aspects of television culture as follows:

faster and snappier pace - rapid changes of theme and mood

increased use of story telling - rather than abstract argument

decreased dependence on linear flow - increased tendency to leave unseen the links between key scenes

increasing informality - consider at one extreme the starchiness of fifties television: but note also, in the eighties, that middle aged guests on quiz shows now wear jumpers and open necked shirts, rather than the once mandatory tie and jacket: this is of course reflected throughout our society by an increasing use of first names, and by the increasing rarity of the use of titles and robes of office

increasing participation - whether on Question Time, or Any Questions or quiz shows, we see that the passive audience whose task is to sit down and imbibe the wisdom of the party on the platform is a model in rapid decline

increasing visual impact - crude advertising gives a verbal hard sell; sophisticated advertising recognises that what the eye sees is often more persuasive/seductive than what the ear hears. This is further reflected in the retailing revolution: the retail industry increasingly recognises itself as a major leisure pursuit, so the customer must be attracted to browse for what he doesn't actually need to buy. What's more, with so many private cars today, shoppers develop such loyalty as they have towards the shop that looks right, not towards personal service - thus, for example, the demise and ultimate takeover of Debenhams, who were seen to be providing the products but failing to provide the right environment.

This produces a grave problem for many churches. We live in an age where many consumers first assess a product by its package, and a retail outlet by its shop window and entrance: the whole experience of modern shopping creates this kind of visual responsiveness. But many church buildings are tired and old, in need of renovation. Many church foyers are visually a drab mess. The result: a negative impression is being formed of the "product" even before the believers are met and the message is preached.

Most of these characteristics are in themselves probably neither good nor bad. What they reflect is neither an intrinsically better or worse set of values and style of communication. But they do reflect the familiar conventions of the television age: this is the kind of communication with which most people are most at home, and it bears little relation to the unspoken cultural conventions of most Christians' Sunday services.

b) Technology

It's not only the feel of television programmes that is getting faster. We are living at a faster pace with an accelerating pace of change. Toffler well described this "death of permanence" and the consequent "future shock" - "...if the last 50,000 years of man's existence were divided into lifetimes of approximately sixty-two years each, there have been about 800 such lifetimes. Of these 800, fully 650 were spent

in caves. Only during the last seventy lifetimes has it been possible to communicate effectively from one lifetime to another - as writing made it possible to do. Only during the last six lifetimes did masses of men ever see a printed word. Only during the last four has it been possible to measure time with any precision. Only in the last two has anyone anywhere used an electric motor. And the overwhelming majority of all the material goods we use in daily life today have been developed within the present, the 800th, lifetime."

In Toffler's words, the present lifetime "marks a sharp break with all past human experience". (Toffler p22). We are moving beyond the period of "built-in obsolescence". Today, new technology is outmoded before it breaks down. Indeed, in the computer industry, with ever broadening impact on daily living, by the time a product is launched on the market, the next generation of that hardware is already in prototype.

c) The Christian context

Churches respond slowly to rapid change. Indeed, that is one of the reasons why new churches spring up: people become increasingly culturally isolated from hidebound churches. Back in the sixties, Gavin Reid wrote of the Gagging of God: though much has changed since then, there is still much catching up to do and a sequel could still be written about the continuing failure of the church to respond and incarnate itself appropriately within our cultural context.

We may, however, identify some key factors of change in churches. First there has been a contemporisation of Bibles and liturgies. The AV has been swept away, and the RSV, which held the fort for a while, has followed it. Out of the profusion of new Bible translations, the Good News and the NIV now dominate the market and look set to continue to do so.

Michael Baughen, Bishop of Chester, sums up this revolution: "It was not long ago that most Christians in the English speaking world used the Authorised Version of the Bible. The present stream of new translations would have seemed unthinkable at the time, yet now they are not only commonplace but widely accepted as enhancing our understanding of the Bible. Similarly, users of the Book of Common Prayer twenty years ago would hardly have anticipated the new liturgies taking such a hold in the 1980's." (HTC, general preface).

Hymns have then been left as the most archaic part of public worship, but change here too is now well under way, removing archaisms, excesses of sentimentality (often Victorian) and introducing where fitting non-sexist "inclusive" language. As Michael Sward commented, such modernisation is a matter of increasing urgency: "To leave them unrevised in that situation is to create a verbal and

cultural gulf which cannot be to the long term advantage of Christians at worship." (HTC, words preface).

A second key change is the increase in mobility. No longer do most people grow up, marry and die in the same church. No longer do most people have a strong sense of denominational identity. On the contrary, the pattern of shopping around within an area irrespective of denomination, combined with regularly moving to a new home, means that church members are often more widely experienced of different denominations today, more aware of what is going on in different local churches, and therefore in many ways more truly representative of the wider church than many ministers. "That's the way we've always done it here" is increasingly just not viable in the commercial world. It's also growing ever more hollow in the church as well.

This mobility has a further aspect. New Christian conferences, without denominational identity, have exploded in recent years. Spring Harvest has grown in a decade from 1,000 to 70,000. The scale of impact is even greater, since not by any means everyone goes every year. What this means is that it is much easier for church members to be fully aware and involved, quickly, in new developments in the national church. Ministers and colleges can easily be left behind, much less well informed and experienced than many church members.

The third key factor is the ever more pervasive influence of charismatic renewal. It is not only here to stay, it is influencing more and more local churches, including many who would not consciously identify themselves by the label "charismatic". This reflects McGavran's suggestion that there is a "third wave" now underway of spiritual renewal among those who would not accept the classical Pentecostal Pneumatology.

Renewal increasingly reflects the new norm of evangelicalism: it can no longer be marginalised as some kind of lunatic or irrelevant extreme. The middle ground of evangelicalism has shifted, even as evangelicalism has become increasingly stronger within the historic denominations.

Informality, expectancy in worship, participation rather than passivity, openness to manifestations of God in worship, the ministries of healing and prophecy, a desire for closer and more expressive loving fellowship, the use of contemporary songs which speak of an intimate love relationship with God, a readiness to use the performing arts in public worship, all these trends are touching more and more churches.

None of these developments comes problem free - of course not. Nor should these activities be confused with the heart of renewal: the need for every believer to be filled and to

go on being filled with the Spirit of God in order to be empowered for worship and witness. But the tide is flowing unremittingly, in what may be seen as a confluence of inevitable trends of belated responsiveness to our culture and, at the same time, though the two are never synonymous and should not be confused, with a sovereign and restorative work of the Spirit of God. Renewal, over the last thirty years, is undoubtedly a factor of immense significance in the revitalisation of evangelicalism in modern Britain.

Without considering the philosophical background to our age, and without exploring the relativising impact of pluralism - tolerate all things as of essentially similar worth - individualism - if it works for you that's great, but no guarantee that it would work for me - and consumerism - I'm in control before the great smorgasbord of life, to choose as I see fit - we must recognise solely with reference to the factors we have explored above a cultural shift undertaken by our society which the traditional churches are struggling to accommodate. Contrary to John Robinson, who once suggested a conceptual incompatibility in most people's thinking between a God who acts and turning on an electric light switch, I would suggest that the major issue for the church is not doctrinal. (Modern liberalism has surely failed to be self-generating, reflecting the common values of our age in a religious garb, or being a framework of rigorous abstract constructs stimulating to an esoteric elite but often incomprehensible and bankrupt of life-changing impact for the common man : unpreachable and without life changing good news for a lost world). Rather, the fundamental crisis is cultural, and thus of perceived relevance. Whatever the content, the message is not heard if it has to be shouted across an ever widening cultural chasm.

In a recent Gallup survey, the clear majority in every age group under 50 find traditional worship boring. What's more, those in their fifties are commonly an absent generation from churches, so we find that traditional worship is accessible largely to those who have retired (this is confirmed by the age profile of the viewers for televised services), plus those who have grown up in the Christian sub-culture and are therefore accustomed to it.

Some of these folk resist any change. They love the subculture to which they are accustomed. They find a security in a relatively change-free church faced with an ever changing surrounding culture. Some have been taught to suspect all things new, and some have imbibed the residual platonism of some hymns - "change and decay in all around I see" i.e. change is more or less synonymous with decay. The sub-culture works for them; it is their home, and they see no reason to change it now. The same was true for the missionaries in China who resisted Hudson Taylor. Quite simply, there will always be

refuges for former ways, but the church has always needed to renew and rediscover itself in new cultural contexts, and it needs to respond more radically to our rapidly changing culture today: this is an integral part of the mission of the church. (See Donovan for a profound and stimulating account of his cross-cultural rediscovery of the heart of the Gospel). To recall the PACLA call for contextualisation: **my heart yearns for the other 50 million in Britain who will not traditionalise in order to become Christian.**

Finally, we must recognise a paradox which faces any organisation within our cultural context: for the traditionalists, time is the payment which earns trust and trust is the basis for subsequent change. But for the modernists, who have entered into the cultural experience of our day, change is the normal experience of life, thus, for such people, change needs to be delivered in order for the trust to grow which will allow them to give leaders time in a job - not that change once delivered can then simply be institutionalised; on the contrary, such people increasingly embrace the truth that constant change is here to stay. The equations are as follows:

time → Trust → change

change → trust → time → change

In fact, whereas the first group hope to put off change, don't like the idea of it and assume that once it has happened things will at least settle down again, the second diagram, rather than a linear progression, would be more accurately represented as a circle, reflecting the dynamism of continuous change.

Neither group is 'right' over against the other, they simply reflect different cultural contexts. Both outlooks have weaknesses. But both outlooks are a fact of life today, with the willing embrace of the dynamism of change inevitably becoming ever more dominant. To put it more personally, as a fifties baby, I can remember our first car, first TV, first colour TV, first automatic washing machine, first fridge, first freezer, first hi-fi, first video, first microwave etc. My experience of everyday living has been built on the fact of change that is both continuous and accelerating: sometimes the pace may seem bewilderingly fast, but continuous change is actually one of the constant factors in my total experience of life.

These groups can all too easily sling insults at one another, two of the favourite among Christians being "dead" and "irreverent": we surely need to learn that all that is traditional is not intrinsically dead, and that all that is contemporary is not necessarily irreverent just because it wasn't done that way in years gone by.

The church that commits itself to standing with the culture of yesteryear has made a

perfectly legitimate choice, but it can hardly then complain about a new church springing up to meet the needs of those who see no good reason why joining a church requires a cultural shift akin to passing through a time warp. Our incarnation of the gospel in any culture must include a critical detachment and appraisal of that culture, but the long term needs of the church and the world cannot be met by such churches as stay doggedly in the culture of a bygone age.

We are now in a position to present our second proposition:

Living worship needs to be continuously "made new".

The process of contemporization is never complete.

(Part 2 will include a brief bibliography and notes.)

BOOK REVIEWS



THE SIMON PETER FILE

Derek Wood (IVP £2.50).

When I was a publisher things were more predictable. IVP provided good, solid evangelical books. Safe perhaps, but reliable. Not too much about the Holy Spirit. Now a fresh wind is blowing. Not a wind that dismisses IVP's great evangelical heritage. But a wind that recognises that the best of renewal and the best of classical evangelicalism are not merely compatible. They positively need each other and flourish best when seen as one.

Derek Wood put us all in his debt with **The Barnabas Factor**, a combination of light narrative and applied teaching that made compelling reading. Having called us to mutual encouragement he now tells how renewal comes to the fictional setting of Canwell Park Church. As the "trads" and the "rads" take up the cudgels, overstating their own convictions and misrepresenting each other, you will not find it hard to see yourself or some in your church.

The resolution of the narrative is perhaps too neat and swift a compromise, but the message is clear and timely: even as Simon Peter expressed paradoxes of temperament and learned to hold together truths which seemed at first contradictory, the way forward for evangelicals in renewal need not be in the polarised twins of extravagance and reaction. Wood holds out the promise that, beyond the senescence of traditionalism and beyond the adolescence of first generation charismatic novelty, there is a new synthesis forming, dynamic and creative, thoroughly biblical and thoroughly open to the power of the Spirit of Christ. A book of profit and enjoyment for whole churches.

WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?

Michael Griffiths (STL £1.95)

Former General Director of OMF and former Principal of LBC, Michael Griffiths demonstrates that the Christian God is a missionary God. He argues that the central thrust of world mission is to plant churches of new believers. He demystifies the concept of "the call", showing the variety of means of calling in the New Testament: direct supernatural intervention; sensible and responsible planning; circumstantial guidance; invitation by believers; sending by churches; chosen by missionary leaders. He faces the sacrifices of service; loss of cultural privilege and status; standard of living; security and health; family and friends; life itself. Not afraid to speak of the personal cost of his own overseas work, he also tells of the fulfilment and explains how he has learnt to revel in God's service. When many British Christians have more time for self-fulfilment than world mission, this practical handbook is a welcome reissue.

THE CHALLENGE OF MISSIONS

Oswald J. Smith (Marshalls £2.50).

First published in 1959, this remains a momentous call to world mission. Read it and see for yourself why Malcolm Widdecombe at Pip and Jays Church Bristol has made it compulsory reading for new members of his church, and why he states - "This book has the power to change lives and transform churches".

AN EBONY CROSS

Io Smith (Marshalls £3.50).

Io Smith is a fighter. She tells vividly of her West Indian childhood and the shock and pain of racial prejudice when she came to Britain in the fifties. Out of that pain comes her fight against racism in society and in the church and also her fight against the degradation of women. Though her style is polemical, she has every reason to be passionate in the pursuit of justice. Io came to Britain as a Baptist, but she found White British Baptists would not welcome her and had nothing to say about the power of the Holy Spirit. Two more reasons why we in particular need to hear her voice today.

THE GOD OF OUR JOURNEY

Michael Walker, (Marshalls £4.99.)

Richard Foster once wrote, "Superficiality is the curse of our age.... The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people." Michael Walker's last book, before his untimely death, is a deep book written by a deep person and will result in making those who read it deep people.

Taking the theme of our pilgrimage with God, Michael Walker leads us through our growth through prayer, the church, discipleship, relationships, our life in the world, suffering and finally death. It is beautifully written; its prose is a joy to

read. It is theologically aware, as one would expect. It is acutely sensitive.

Time and again I found myself saying, "I hadn't thought of that." I was glad he made me think. His chapters on suffering and death had special impact, perhaps because death was so unexpectedly close for him. There is a profound capturing of the experience of suffering and death here which reminded me of C.S. Lewis's A Grief Observed. I wish I had read it before I preached recently on suffering.

It is a world-affirming book, a joyful book which insists that God reveals himself in the material world, in the visible and the human and that the human, not the supernatural, is the proper home of what is spiritual. As often, I wanted to affirm that he affirms but to deny what he denies. His looking askance at the Charismatic movement, his questioning of substitutionary penal atonement, his indiscriminating acceptance of the world were some of the points at which I would dissent. But as an evangelical I needed to hear what Michael Walker says to make up for the deficiencies in my own theology. I am a richer, deeper person for having read this book. It was a fitting legacy for Michael to leave.

Dr. Derek J. Tidball
Plymouth.

THESE WONDERFUL GIFTS!

by Michael Harper (Hodder £2.25).

The beleaguered charismatic minority of the early sixties has become a powerful and growing global force. David Barrett estimates 332 million charismatics worldwide - currently the fastest growing Christian grouping. A majority of the world's largest churches are Pentecostal/Charismatic and they have the largest number of citywide missions worldwide. Well over 50% of Anglican ordinands are now evangelical, and most of them identify with charismatic renewal. The same is true for the majority of students in Baptist colleges. Michael Harper rejoices in this massive shift of consensus - "When we started out we were regarded as freaks and largely ignored. But what joy it is to see the situation completely changed now. It is now longer an unusual experience of God's grace; today it is shared by so many."

Not that there is uniformity. Indeed when the days of dismissive hostility are passing, charismatic variety is more evident. I detect five main emphases:

- i) Classical Pentecostal - Baptism in the Spirit with mandatory tongues. Given by God after tarrying before him. (Azusa Street).
- ii) Claiming Pentecostal - Baptism in the Spirit with mandatory tongues. Given by God after claiming in prayer, whether for oneself or another (e.g. Cecil Cousen).
- iii) Fullness Charismatic - A crisis event, with or without tongues. Leads to a higher,

level of service and holiness. (influences: Keswick, Wesley and Pentecostalism).

iv) Baptismal Charismatic - One baptism in the Spirit, with or without tongues, followed by many fillings. The initial crisis experience is unrepeatable, like water baptism. (Michael Harper).

v) Many fillings Charismatic - Many fillings, many gifts. The fillings include, and often begin with, crisis experiences of memorable blessing. The decisive issue is continuing to be filled, not the evidence of any particular experience or gift.

Michael Harper writes for all these groups as he seeks to encourage the healthy and mature use of spiritual gifts. His worldwide experience is invaluable, and his advice practical. Writing for the new consensus he seeks not to justify the gifts theologically once again, but rather to help those, accepting the gifts in theory, who want to use them more in the local church.

ALONE by Katie Wiebe (Hodder £2.95).

One in seven women in Britain today is a widow. Every day 500 are widowed. Katie Wiebe writes from her own experience of grief, loss of identity, emotional and sexual loneliness after her husband's death, and yet tells of God's sustaining love - "When my husband died, I thought I was lost again - but God has helped me find my way." A book with no easy answers, but with much wisdom and strength for those widowed and those who want to understand.

FACING DEPRESSION

by Michael Lawson (Hodder £2.95).

Michael Lawson, former Director of Pastoring at All Souls, Langham Place, follows **Facing Anxiety and Stress** with an equally useful book. He helps the depressed and the carer understand the many faces of depression and shows how to find appropriate help. Roger Hurding gives high praise in his foreword - "A book which will help many. Readers will find the wisdom in these pages factual, practical and scriptural. Outstanding."



COMING SOON

Patrick Johnstone: Reaching the World - at What Cost?

Richard Foster: A Deeper Spiritual Life

Steve Chalke: Christmas Unwrapped

Peter Swaffield: Christians in Sport

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