

A WORD AND SPIRIT
MAIN) TREAM
NETWORK

Magazine Issue 69 – November 2000

Issue Theme:

Mind the Gap – church meets community

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Editorial

Ever since we ran evangelistic discos on Merseyside in the late 70's one of my greatest passions has been to see the gospel effectively connect with contemporary culture. So, when it came to me to guest edit the last Mainstream magazine for 2000, what had promised to be an onerous chore turned into a delight when the gospel/culture theme was decided upon.



In the pages that follow are some cracking pieces. In them you'll find thinkers thinking and practitioners practising, as well as some excellent resources to help you ponder and pray further about how to engage our culture with the gospel in your situation. In the mean time here's a quote from Casaldàliga that has been playing with my mind for some time. I hope it gets inside your heart too! He says this; "*The universal Word only speaks dialect*". Think about it, meditate on it if you like, you'll be surprised where the Lord takes you as you unpack it further.

I am really indebted to those who have written for us this time. No one declined my invitation, and the only missing article is that of George Kovoov who spoke so effectively at this year's assembly in Plymouth. His computer was stolen with the text on it before he had either backed it up or emailed it to me. There's a salutary lesson for all of us!

However, in the pages that follow you will find articles from the following leaders:

Simon Hall is leader of the Revive congregation of the Sharing Life network in Leeds. Revive has a vision to reach 18-30s from the pub and club culture.

Nigel Wright has recently left Altrincham Baptist Church, where he was Senior Minister, to return to Spurgeon's College to take up the post of Principal.

Mark Greene is the Executive Director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and has a passion to see Christians take the workplace seriously.

Joe Davis / David M A Evans did not write their article together but do know each other quite well. Both are Baptist ministers. Joe works bi-vocationally with a firm of Graphic Designers (Ocean Blue) alongside researching new

models of church for the Oasis Trust. David Evans is working as a Consultant with Tear Fund.

Rob Warner needs little introduction as an author, speaker, broadcaster and former co-chair of Mainstream. He presently leads the Kairos, church from scratch congregation in South London.

Roger Standing, that's me, and I'm the Senior Minister at West Croydon BC in London as well as being on Mainstream's leadership team.

Peter Stevenson has provided us with the additional resource material. He is the Tutor in Applied Theology and Open Learning at Spurgeon's, and is happy to provide further material if you'd like to contact him at the college or send him an email at p.stevenson@spurgeons.ac.uk.

At a recent Mainstream leadership team meeting I was reminded of an informal promise I had made to update readers about the outcome of our "seeker" type experiment, **First Sunday**, since the beginning of the year. You may remember the couple of articles in previous editions of the magazine. Well, we have just brought the trial period to a close. Was it a success? Certainly attendance has been up, between 10 - 45%, yet we have not seen the number of conversions we had hoped for. However, there is now a nucleus of twenty-somethings in the church that were not there before! Our review process continues as we seek the Lord's way forward.

Roger Standing

Culture Gap Quote 1.

It is precisely because the gospel emerged in history that we have to understand it as also incarnated in a culture ... we will look in vain for a 'pure gospel' ... it is also a cultural product - brought to life by the person and deeds of Jesus

(Andrew Walker)

Greetings from the front line of the culture wars!



Have you ever noticed how much animosity humanity has reserved for people who are *nearly* like us? There is no feeling quite like that reserved for the person who used to be one of us, but is no longer. In the culture wars between our modern church and its post-modern context, the only event that turns each side's cannons from the other is the sight of a possible defection. Who was it who said that the church is the only army that kills its own wounded? And here I stand, pock-marked with the shrapnel of ridicule and abuse from the world I live in day to day, the world of the electronic bordello in my living room, a world of "free" people ruled by their genitals, their T'ai Chi instructors and their overdrafts. Here I stand, feeling the blood running down my legs from a thousand cuts: too old, too young, not accountable enough, theologically inadequate, not right, *not like us*. I am a traitor. If only I had embraced either the world, with its hollow libertarian hymnal, or the church, which fiddles with its minutiae while creation burns, then surely I would be happy. As it is, I remain stubbornly where I am: target practice.

Here's a bit of my story. I experienced a dramatic conversion – I think I must be what William James once described as a “sick soul”: prone to doubts, crises, peaks and troughs. I was a 15-year-old heavy metallor suddenly attending a *lovely* suburban church. Within a year I was wearing Top Man and eagerly anticipating the latest Vineyard songbook. But it wasn't me: I ended up living a comfortably dualistic life, getting into the goth and indie music scenes of Leeds in the mid-1980s while maintaining my “holy” image on a Sunday. Being a Christian was about attending church and keeping my bedroom tidy, so it was a while before the two worlds collided. I'd got into a goth band and we had a big gig on a Sunday night. We were all Christians so I approached the youth pastor to ask for him to pray for us. Not only would he not pray for us, but he told me that the people at the club we were playing at were “beyond saving”. I was removed from all leadership responsibility in the youth group.

The feeling that my enjoyment of popular culture – music, movies, computer games, novels – was somehow sinful remained with me for many years after that moment. Greenbelt 1988 changed my

**I knew that God lived
everywhere,
He inhabited *my* world**

life once again, and left me an eternal refugee in the new cultural landscape. Sheffield's Nine O'clock Service led worship that year using music that combined my goth heritage with the new

dance music. My two allegedly competing and contradictory worlds collided in an explosion of such beautiful creativity that I was ruined forever. I knew that God lived everywhere, not just in the Victorian era or in late-60s California. He inhabited *my* world. I knew from that point on that any churchman who tried to convince me that I had to live in his world to meet God was lying.

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Much, much later and I'm sitting in the same church and *I'm* the youth pastor. We've just had a mission in the local school and it's Sunday night: the time when the teenagers come to church. We're hoping to have a few extra visitors, and guess what? They come early! Maybe a dozen teenagers arrive at 6:15 and file into the back row by the door. My boss is expecting them too, and after the political sop of an opening hymn, the service will be a seeker-sensitive treat. I'm sitting front-left with the church young people: there's a bit of a buzz about the visitors and as we rise for the opening hymn I turn round and see all the visitors sitting back-right. At the end of the hymn I turn round again and they're gone, all but one of them. And they never came back.

So I put a bit more effort into revive, a monthly youth worship event. It's great, people can tell something's going on. Would the young people like to lead worship in the main congregation? I'm really keen, because the young

people (having been given room to create authentic worship within their own culture) have become spoilt like me and they have a tendency to look bored in our Sunday evening services. I can't wait to show the church that their boredom is because their own way of meeting on a Sunday is so much more exciting. The service is not a success. Three visitors sitting on the front row have a dramatic experience of God to which they testify later that evening, but behind them the majority don't even stand up. One of the church's worship leaders approaches me after the service and criticises the young people for not using music that all the congregation can connect with. There seems to be no understanding of the irony of her comment.

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I don't really understand why a church, which is certainly progressive, could be experienced thus. Perhaps it's because a bike zooming along at 30mph is still going to be left behind by a car going at 70. Perhaps we really do need a completely new form of church.

**Perhaps we really do
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new form of church.**

Graham Cray is of the opinion that my generation are the greatest casualties of the culture war: that once modernism as we knew and loved/hated it has been properly replaced, we will all return to a more homogenous culture where otherwise sane people don't feel the need to read Foucault, Baudrillard and Lyotard before choosing which breakfast cereal to buy. Well, I'm glad for my kids. I just hope there'll be a church for them to be part of.

I recently wrote a paper for a conference under the title, 'What's so "alt." about alt. worship?' It was only when I tried to put my mind to thinking about this stuff that I realised what a terrible state we are in. The reason so-called alternative worship has been embraced by a generation reared on the escapist shenanigans of the charismatic movement is because it touches real life, however obliquely. That this should be something novel is at the heart of our problem.

I have to say that those of us caught in the middle of this war are struggling to survive. Many of us have retreated to the Christian ghetto and kept our amps turned up to 11 so the noise drowns out our retreat. Others of us found a variety of places much more welcoming and adopted our message accordingly. We need your help. Mike Riddell, probably the alt. worship movement's most eloquent spokesman, has recently become a Catholic, albeit a recalcitrant one. In *Mass Culture* (Ed Pete Ward 1998 London: SPCK) the former Baptist minister speaks of the need for weight in his life. Of course, the weight Riddell is speaking of is precisely that which he has been rebelling against for so many years, but describing the problem does not

solve it. Here are three weighty matters where weight is needed from somewhere:

The nature of the gospel

. There is a generation of church-going young people now reaching adulthood that is struggling to identify with the traditional images of salvation. I wonder if the world-wide appropriation of the film *The Matrix* by Christians is an unwitting admission of our problem: the heroes know what reality is all about, but it is much worse than the fantasy land that their empty-headed fellow-humans enjoy. Those who know the truth are constantly tempted to return to the pleasures of their previous delusion. Hardly a great motivation to evangelism! We need new expressions of salvation that make the new generations excited and proud to own the name of Jesus.

The nature of ministry

We seem to have forgotten that the heavenly city in Revelation has no temple; that God's idea of a new humanity in a new creation has no room for church. If we want to practice for "heaven", we should become good citizens and not good singers. Please help us work out how to love the world and work out our discipleship within it.

The nature of church

We need each other just to keep going: George Lings of the Sheffield Centre describes most churches catering for young adults in the UK as "safety nets, not fishing nets", but surely stemming the tide of departures is a start? Help us to work out what an authentic missional church within popular culture will need to look like if we are going to make disciples of all *ethne*.

I'm not absolutely sure why I've majored on the negative, because there are a few green shoots coming up through the cracks in the cement. I honestly believe we are in the middle of a great awakening, unfortunately we are so detached from our cultural context that we aren't noticing it and the people around certainly aren't coming to us to answer their questions. But things can be different. There are ways of placing ourselves in the culture so that when God is up to stuff, people want to talk to us about it. But maybe that's another article...

Simon Hall

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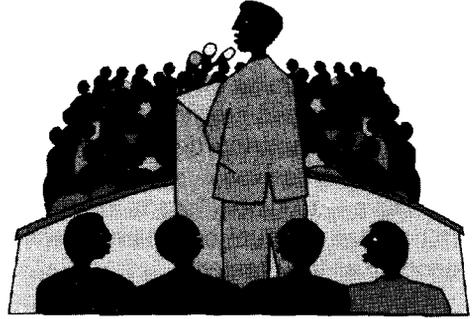
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Rediscovering Evangelists

In July I was in Cuba for the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance. As well as affording me revealing insights into the life of one of the few remaining Communist regimes, I was greatly challenged through this visit by the story of the church.



On the first Sunday morning I attended the packed Calvary Baptist Church in Havana. The service was in Spanish yet bore traces of the American origins of Baptist work in Cuba. The music was rich (Cubans love live music). The pastor preached and gave an appeal to which half a dozen responded by going to the front. He also asked those who had responded last time to stand. Seven or eight did so. During the week various of the visiting Baptists preached at meetings in Havana and surrounding areas. Without exception people responded to the appeals given; in one venue twenty people went forward. This dynamic means that in five years Baptist have grown from 15000 to over 40000. The pastor at Calvary told a group I was in how thrilled he was to have been a part of such a revival during the last part of his ministry.

I could not help comparing this experience with our own. One of the enduring mysteries of my own

ministry is how few people I see being converted in response to my preaching (!). There is at least some reason to believe that this is not entirely to do with the preaching itself. Preachers who in this country see little response find an overwhelming response to the same message in some other countries. Rather it appears to have to do with the 'atmosphere'. I'm not a great one for 'territorial spirits' and 'strategic level warfare' but if these ideas contain a truth we might all embrace it has to do with the spiritual atmosphere of regions, nations and institutions. In this country, or possibly more accurately wherever white Westerners are in the majority, something has to change in the atmosphere before we will see the kind of response that in Cuba (and other countries like Uganda or Ukraine) seems to be, at least for the moment, the norm. It is more than the fact that the gap between church community and wider community has grown. This is undoubtedly true. But in Cuba, where there is no shortage

of active spiritist cults, that gap is in all probability as large as here: it is rather to do with the openness of the spiritual climate into which the message of Christ is proclaimed. While the West remains enamoured with the spirituality of consumerism, being church and growing church will not be easy and the debilitating pull among ourselves towards a corrosive religious consumerism rather than spiritual commitment will become all the greater.

I have two comments to add to the wealth of insights needed if both in our theology and our practice of mission we are to respond realistically to the needs of the moment. One concerns the development of welcoming and affirming churches served by welcoming and attractive ministers, the other concerns the still underdeveloped ministry of evangelists. These reflections are not unrelated to the new ministry I myself have entered into as principal of a theological college.

The church's two-fold dynamic

The church exists within a dynamic of gathering and scattering. We gather to worship, learn and encourage. We scatter to witness and to serve. This is being salt and light. The light is intense and obvious; the salt is invisible and scarcely discernible. Both movements within this dynamic are crucial. Evangelism counts for little if there is no community base to sustain and nurture. Community counts for little if it is not extrovert

and other-directed. Christian communities are indispensable because increasingly we see that people need to belong to a community before they can learn the language and thought-forms of belief. For this reason each Christian community must apply itself to being an open church, welcoming of outsiders and able to assist them to journey into faith and then journey onwards in faith. In doing this we need to value the skills of pastoral evangelism, that kind of evangelism with which most of our ministers are most familiar and which arises out of the week on week encounters with people either in their homes or as they participate in church life. This form of evangelism is given a new impetus as we are shaped in the direction of 'seeker-friendliness'. Other kinds of evangelism are radically handicapped without it. We should continue working out what it means to be the church without walls. It has been my privilege for the last five years to be part of a church with a well-developed philosophy and practice of working with thoughtful seekers after God. It is necessary, but it is not sufficient, because in a society where the gap gets greater and greater it is not enough to want to welcome people in. We have to go out looking for them.

Accrediting evangelists

Alongside pastoral evangelism, that absolutely necessary form of outreach carried out by the church in its interpersonal caring relationships, we need to revalue the work of the evangelist. *Evangelists are people*

who go out beyond the boundaries of the church community into new and other realms with the message of Christ. The Baptist Union deserves credit for remodelling its understanding of ministry and its accreditation processes so as to take account, among other ministries, of the evangelist. At the moment this is being worked out in detail and so it is timely to advocate some arguments about the way it is shaped. The assumptions with which we begin are all-important and here I set out some of mine.

My first assumption is that we need many evangelists. In fact I am tempted to say that we need more evangelists than we do pastors, precisely because the task is so great. This is not to say we shall ever get them but it does get us out of thinking that we need to accredit a few evangelists here and there. Women and men, black and white, young and old, trendy or traditional, we need lots of these people and they must be varied since the situations they have to reach are infinitely varied.

My second assumption is that all evangelists need to be church-related but not necessarily church-based. Evangelism properly understood is that process of initiating people into the kingdom of God and an essential part of this is incorporating them into the body of Christ. Evangelists who don't understand this don't understand their job. There is abundant evidence suggesting that it is not that

hard to get people to make a first-time response to Christ; it is much harder to build such a response into a lifetime of discipleship in fellowship with other disciples. And is conversion real if it is not followed through in this way? Evangelists need to understand the place of the church and to relate to church, but this does not mean that all will be part of the staff team – some will be, but by the nature of things they will tend to be pastoral evangelists by gifting.

My third assumption is that we need to set evangelists free from the burden of overseeing churches. This to me is the crucial distinction between a new approach to evangelists and the role of the pastor-teacher (what other traditions sometimes call the 'presbyter'). Overseeing churches is such a time-consuming, energy-absorbing activity, that if evangelists are to go beyond the boundaries of the church they are best not burdened with it (and it is a burden). Our denominational mind set here might trip us up, since in recognising new ministries we are so keen that they should not be seen as 'second-rate' or as 'an easy way into ministry' that we might expect evangelists to do everything that presbyters do only more. It's time to do away with this and recognise that there are diversities of ministry.

My fourth assumption is that we need so many evangelists that we are unable to pay for them for all. Some evangelists will be employed by local churches, trusts, clusters,

associations and Unions but they will not be the majority. What we can pay for must not become a ceiling on how many we can recruit. Other accredited evangelists might be employed by 'parachurch' organisations. As far as I am concerned this is fine since parachurch organisations can often get to places and tasks that churches cannot and have a degree of flexibility in doing so. Valuable experience so gained might later be harnessed within local churches as evangelists vary their ministries. The crucial point is that not being church-based does not mean not being church-related. **Then there is the final assumption:**

Most evangelists will be in full or part-time employment or self-supporting in other ways.

To be in Christian ministry as an evangelist does not of necessity mean being paid in such a post. Early retired people are an increasing resource for the churches; increasing numbers of people order their earning lives to set them free

for other tasks. For some evangelists paid work will be something they do to accumulate the means to do what they most of all want to do. For yet others their work will be an integral part of their evangelistic work as they understand it, serving and healing, creating and moulding, teaching and influencing, pursuing justice and fairness, expressing compassion and mercy. If evangelism includes the evangelisation of culture as well as of persons (and this points to the need for an adequate theology of mission), a working or professional life can be an instrument of such a ministry.

As far as evangelists are concerned, the present could be an opportunity to make something significant happen and to have people in place who are well qualified to make a difference now and to do so all the more when the atmosphere shifts, as we pray it will and must.

Dr Nigel G Wright

Culture Gap Quote 2.

What else did the presence of the Holy Spirit indicate at Pentecost except that God's church was to speak in the language of every people?

(Sixth Century African Theologian)

HOW WILL THE WEST BE WON?

The question was answered back in 1945 in a document called 'Towards the Conversion of England'. They answered it in one sentence. Of course, there were thousands of words round that one sentence. And of course we could dismiss it by arguing that the world has changed enormously – technologically, structurally, and ideologically. Or we could point out that the church has changed enormously - lost almost all its voice in the public square, dwindled... we could rehearse the long litany of woes and obstacles that might hamper the progress of the Gospel. But that old 1945 sentence addresses the key problem head on. The key problem of evangelism is: who, where and how. Who will do it? Where will they do it? How will they do it?

So here's that sentence:

“We are convinced that England will never be converted until the laity use the opportunities for evangelism daily afforded by their various professions and occupations.”

The laity will do it.

Makes sense. There are some 3 to 4 million people attending church once a month or more and only about 34,000 ministers.

But the British church doesn't really believe in the laity.

And nor does the laity.

If we did, more adults would be able to share the Gospel, or even their testimony with confidence. A while back *All Nations Christian College* asked their new students – all called to mission – whether they could share their testimony. Half couldn't.

At the time, I was working at London Bible College, probably the best Bible College in the world, so I figured our first term intake would do better. Exactly the same result. Why? No one had trained them to do it. My admittedly sketchy research suggests that over 80% of adults in British churches are not confident to share the Gospel. There's no point exhorting people to do evangelism if they're not confident to share the Gospel – they won't do it.

Where will the West be Won?

Well, the West will be won where our people have relationships. And that for the vast majority of adults is in the

workplace. It's where they spend 60 - 70 % of their waking lives. It's where non-Christians can't get away from them. And it's where they can't get away from non-Christians. It's where people can see the difference that Jesus makes in a life – not for a couple of hours over dinner but for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty hours a week in the rough and tumble, joys and disappointments of work.

The people, who see our lives most don't live next door, they work at the next desk.

However, overall the British church does not support the workers. 50% of evangelicals have never heard a sermon on work. And across the denominations research indicates that the workers say that we're not helping them with our teaching, our worship, our pastoral care, our prayer etc. Contemporary Christians are simply not being equipped for life where they spend a huge portion of it. As one schoolteacher put it, "I teach Sunday school 45 minutes a week and they haul me up to the front of the church to pray for me. I teach school 40 hours a week and the church has never prayed for me." And that's a teacher – the kind of job Christians tend to approve of.

This neglect of the worker is one symptom of the sacred secular divide that has hampered the progress of the Gospel since Augustine. It explains why, as one senior student ministry executive put it, "I could almost guarantee that you could go into any Christian Union in

Britain and not find a single student who could give you a theology of the subject they were studying to degree level". It explains why the vast majority of books on youth work completely ignore what young people spend a big chunk of their time doing – studying maths and French and English literature. Very few organisations, CARE is an obvious exception, have seen that if you don't show kids how their faith is relevant to what they study, then pretty soon they will come to regard the Gospel as irrelevant to the rest of their lives. Christianity becomes a leisure time activity. A neighbour-oriented, leader centred activity. Alas, our kids learn very young to think that the 9-5 is irrelevant to the Worker God of all Creation and of all time.

The pastor-teacher's job is, according to Ephesians 4, to equip God's people for works of service. Where will those works of service be? Only in the church? Or also elsewhere? Surely, elsewhere too. Oh, yes with the support and prayers and wisdom of the people of God. But still not just in the neighbourhood. Most non-church paid workers feel they go to work alone, rather than as the individual representative of the corporate body of Christ, the ambassadors of the king of the Universe. Few home groups actively pray for their members' work life – except in time of crisis. Of course, the leadership of the church is sharply aware that the church is perceived to be irrelevant to the issues of the world, and yet the vast majority of the church spend most of

their time in the world. Is it they who are out of touch with the issues of the world or us? The church is in the world day in day out, we just haven't equipped them to redeem it.

How will the West be won?

By an equipped and supported laity taking the opportunities for evangelism daily afforded...

(And this evangelism will be the evangel of the whole Gospel, the Gospel that addresses not just the issue of personal salvation and individual honesty but addresses issues of justice – of racism, and sexism, of the environment, of the exploitation of the poor, of the oppression of Western white collars workers by the ever-increasing demand for more hours at work, of the insultingly low levels of wages paid to so many in our society.)

If we want to win the West we must go where the people are. If we want to halt the rot of Western institutions and companies we will, for the most part have to do it, from the inside – just like Esther.

And if as leaders we want to support the workers we will have to get to know the issues they face day by day.

Encouragingly, Baptists ministers are in the forefront of this change – and many have been experimenting with ways to support the workers without turning that support into an obsession or merely a fad for a season. A number of area superintendents have put this issue on the agenda of annual association meetings, as indeed the Baptist Assembly put it on the agenda in Plymouth, as indeed our President, Graham Ashworth, made it one of the three key emphases in his year of office.

But this is not an issue for a year. It is about recognising and equipping the laity for their God-ordained ministry wherever God has placed them for such a time as this, it is about asking not only how can this person be used in the church but also how does God want to use this person in the kingdom?

And this requires a radical re-orientation of pastoral ministry, of lay training, and of mission strategy. But it is how the West will be won.

They were convinced back in 1945. But no one took them seriously. But times have changed, haven't they?

Mark Greene

The words alone don't work



[When I read the next two articles I was struck by the similarity of their themes and the issues they raised. With apologies to Joe and David, I have substantially edited them so that they sit next to, and hopefully compliment, each other. If it doesn't work for you – remember it's my fault not theirs. Ed.]

Joe Davis writes:

I've always thought I was a bit of an embarrassment as an evangelist. Technically I suppose that's what I am in that the church has acknowledged evangelism as my primary gifting and I've trained on Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course, however, I hate about 90% of most evangelistic techniques.

Like everything, evangelism is a journey of discovery and in my journey I think I've done my fair share of door to door, EE, sketch-board, open air, big event, little event, small groups, big groups, etc. I've also done my fair share of teaching evangelistic techniques that don't work! Naturally there may be good reasons why I have not had much success at open airs - I don't have a beard, I don't wear socks with sandals, nor do I possess a rainbow guitar strap (and my name is not Dave!). Despite all this I have not become cynical and I have retained an honest optimism about evangelism. My mature reflection on it all (and I might add this is after several curries

and the odd glass of wine for medicinal purposes!) is that evangelism is both a lot easier and much tougher than many have been led to believe. (I am speaking strictly as a post-post-evangelical now!) Easier because it doesn't require memorising whole tracts, behaving like a Jehovah's Witness, or practising the latest evangelistic 4 steps to..., nor does it require immense personal charisma or gifting. It's tougher because there simply are no short-term panaceas; it's long term, messy, unformulaic and relational.

I was greatly relieved by Lawrence Singlehurst's book '*Sowing, Reaping, Keeping*' when it takes the view of

conversion as process rather than event. Especially as it encourages us to take seriously those who are furthest away from Christ with no religious interest at all – which, incidentally, is where most people are! But how will we reach out to those beyond the fringes of our churches?

For an answer as to how to move forward, I look to my wife Rachel. She is someone who would say she isn't sure what her gifts are but, as I see it, she is a fine example of an effective evangelist. When her friend, a Mormon, first got to know Rachel she was suspicious of her, as she had been on the receiving end of many bad experiences with evangelical Christians. Rachel was there for her through a troubled period in her life, never offering tracts or clever answers, simply loving her and her family. Eventually her friend had to concede she had never encountered such love before and gave her life fully to Christ. The love that Rachel offered was costly, it didn't fit comfortably with our family and church diaries, but she loved anyway.

As David Watson used to say "*Do you love people so they can be converted, or do you want to see them converted because you love them?*" It makes a big difference. In

our churches we do need to foster communities where people can belong first before they have to believe, or even before they have to behave acceptably according to our received evangelical practice.

We also need ministries of social action, run by loving communities, where people can come and experience for themselves the love of Christ before they even know what it is. It has been interesting observing how interested my unchurched friends have been in the work of our Day Centre for Asylum Seekers. They think church is *boring* but that this is really good and something they would like to support. I love telling them that this actually is the church!

Someone from the church popped around to see me last night, he was concerned that he wasn't making much impact on a Jehovah's Witness who was repeatedly calling on him. Furthermore he was flummoxed by some of his questions. I assured him that he already had all the tools he needed to win this person to Christ if he was willing to be a friend. I told him how love breaks down barriers and then we looked at a few key verses. He left excited and wondering why he felt daunted by the task!

Joe Davis

David M A Evans writes:

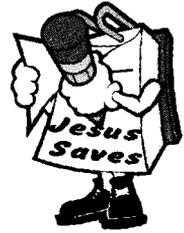
The vocabulary of 'evangelism' and 'social care' has failed to serve the church in providing ordinary people in the pew with a clear understanding of how they are supposed to relate to their neighbour, the poor or both.

I am convinced that this is just part of a much greater challenge which the church faces today. This is not only about the need for a new vocabulary, but the need for a new way of being and expressing what it is to be a child of God, living to bring the Kingdom of God's grace and justice, love and mercy to bear in our world. What I am really concerned about is how we integrate our thinking on 'doing' and 'talking' about being a Christian.

The debate among evangelicals about 'evangelism' and 'social action' has rumbled on for years, but there have been relatively few attempts within mainstream evangelicalism to articulate a coherent explanation of how the two interact in practice and how such interaction can be clearly seen in the Bible.

Added to which, the church is full of intelligent yet frustrated people who know in their hearts that our evangelism really isn't working very well.

From my perspective, the lack of integration of mission in 'word' and 'deed' is symptomatic of the way that we all tend to compartmentalise our lives. We see ourselves at one time in 'work' mode, at another time in



'family' mode, and on Sundays we hit 'church' mode.

We know discipleship is about 'spiritual' transformation and development, yet rarely allow the Bible and God's Spirit to challenge our lifestyle assumptions.

I see five elements that can help contribute to a more integrated discipleship in our contemporary situation:

- **Lifestyle**, both for ourselves and our churches. Our credible witness as Christians in the way we live as our values are impacted by our beliefs (Matt 5:16; James 2:14-26; Matt 25:31-46).
- **Acts of compassion**. It is usual for churches and groups of Christians to reach out into communities to address real needs. Christ's love is given and received through compassionate activity (Luke 5:12; Acts 3:11).
- **Involvement**. It is a poignant fact that Jesus actively drew people to himself by involving non-believers in a process of discovery, which often meant asking them to do things – Zacchaeus prepared and hosted a meal, a Samaritan woman

fetched a pail of water (John 4:5f; Luke 19:2f; Mark 6:7f).

- **Reflection.** Jesus facilitated a process of learning, understanding and thereby, radical personal transformation by opening up the opportunity to reflect on the big questions. In this way he helped to put life events into a framework of Kingdom values and beliefs (John 4:5f; Acts 8:26f).
- **Proclamation.** None of the above decries the absolute need for proclamation, but it does need to be timely and set in the right context of relationships which start and grow without strings (Matt 4:17; 10:7; Acts 9:20).

An important aspect of this model is that the five different elements have to be held together. At its centre is therefore the need for relationships and prayer. These two features imply a level of accountability and learning from one another that will not only sustain a Christian community, but also create the conditions for further growth and impact. It is my belief that until we

take this kind of integrated model on board and see how it accommodates both a common sense approach, as well as being one which accords with Scripture, we will not be able to move forward.

One of the more controversial aspects of this model is that of actively being inclusive. Examples of how this approach has proved effective at helping to bring people to Christ do exist. There is the church in the East End of London that distributed invitations to all the local residents in the high rise estates around the church building, inviting them to become volunteers in the church's elderly care project. Through the training course, which they provided, many heard for the first time a message about a God who cares for the lonely, the isolated and aged. They heard much beside so that seventeen of the volunteers became Christians. We don't perhaps realise just how isolated we make ourselves in our churches when we say that only Christians can have responsibility of any kind.

Culture Gap Quote 3.

More people go to discos than to high opera, and one of the courageous things about evangelicals is their ability to embrace bad taste for the sake of the gospel.

(Richard Holloway)



church from scratch

In May 1998 I was speaking at a conference for Baptist national secretaries of mission from Western and central Europe. I'd been asked to speak on the 21st Century Church, exploring the need for Baptist churches to reinvent themselves in our new cultural setting. Yesterday's forms of church and preaching might as well come from another planet for the generations of the new millennium. The gospel never changes, but the ways in which we express the Good News, in both our preaching and our church life need always to be made new.

The discussion time was thoughtful and provocative. There was a great deal of agreement concerning the missionary task in Europe, even though one delegate went home with enthusiasm but was strongly rebuffed by his fellow Baptists for imbibing the "dangerous liberalism of the West". But there was a sting in the tail. At the end of one session, a French leader said, "Rob, your analysis persuades many of us, but what are you going to do about it?" I explained that I have the opportunity to speak to leaders in many different denominations, including Anglicans

and Methodists, URC and Pentecostals, Salvation Army and new church, as well as Baptists. This wasn't enough for the Frenchman. "Rob," he said, "I believe it would be good for you to pioneer a church for the 21st Century."

If you speak at conferences for leaders, you come to expect a few bouncers during question times. Unknown to the French leader, I was going through a period of painful heart-searching in my ministry. My itinerant speaking was thoroughly rewarding in itself, but I was increasingly aware of a severe

limitation: much of my time is spent training, developing and provoking church leaders, but my teaching was no longer earthed in a local church that was trying to work through the issues I was raising.

In July 1998 I was due to go to the Hampton Court Flower Show, but pressure of work meant I stayed at home. While I was putting some books onto a shelf, I felt God spoke to me in a stark and simple sentence: "You need to start a church".

That August we held weekly brainstorming sessions with a few friends. We asked a simple question:

"If you have the Bible in one hand and our world in the other, what does church need to look like in order to bridge the gap?"

We explained that we were starting with a blank sheet of paper and used the phrase "**church from scratch**". However, we placed one strict rule on our brainstorming: in developing our dreams for what church could be, we wanted to avoid any criticism of other churches.

After a month of brainstorming, we asked if anyone was interested in working with us on a new church plant. 25 signed up and wanted to start meeting as soon as possible. We met in a home for about 7 months and then moved to a school. That served us well for a year and in summer 2000 we moved into the local YMCA for the next phase of our development. We are excited to see

what kind of interface we might develop with the extensive ways in which the YMCA serves the local community.

Here are some of the key principles we have been working at. Of course, your church may be way ahead of us in all these areas. I am merely describing the journey we are trying to make as a church.

1) Less meetings

The message we received from Christians loud and clear was that church too often becomes a treadmill. There's always another activity, another committee. And so we made a pledge not to ask people for more than one evening each week.

2) More meals

There is a profound absence of community in many urban parts of Britain today. Regular meals together as a church have become a high priority, giving people quality time to relate and bond together. Traditional evangelicalism has often been too individualistic, while biblical Christianity is communitarian. We have tried to invest in a strong sense of belonging.

3) High quality promotion

Pizza Hut and our parish church both put leaflets through our door. Only one sells its product effectively through full colour promotional material that is high quality, well-written and well-produced. A friend who is a graphic designer produced a logo for us and we work together on leaflets that are distributed across our area. Our target audience is

non-Christians who have a sense of spiritual interest, however vague, but who have more or less written off church as dull, boring and irrelevant.

4) Website and PowerPoint

For us, to communicate well requires a willingness to use every means of contemporary communication. Our website (www.kairos.org.uk) requires a huge amount of work, but it's worth it. In our services, the words of songs are projected on PowerPoint, often accompanied by relevant photographs; preaching is accompanied by PowerPoint headings and video clips; psalms, poems and prayers are presented with PowerPoint and music.

5) Open Leadership

We have registered as a Baptist church because, just as I am convinced that the church needs to be reinvented, I am also convinced that the key principles of Baptist church life are both biblically grounded and culturally relevant. One small, but significant development for us has been to make public the minutes of our broad leadership team (BLT). So far we've avoided calling anyone a deacon or an elder. We are committed to team leadership, duly appointed by the members of the church. But we recognise that the words "elder" and "deacon" have developed all sorts of connotations in different church settings, which can produce confusing, misleading and even contradictory expectations within a church.

6) Inclusive participation

We want to ensure that everyone, irrespective of age, gender, ethnic

group or background, is able to make their contribution to the full. We are working to develop a climate of encouragement, appreciation and affirmation.

7) Whole life discipleship

I love Bible teaching, but I had to face up to the reality that my agenda was too church centred. I have had to discipline myself to address more fully the whole of life. The biblical grounding must still be there, including the commentary work, but I am also learning to make more connections with TV programmes, movies, and the world or work and politics.

8) Life to the full

We want to work hard at developing life-skills presentations, equally relevant and accessible to Christians and non-Christians, in which people from the church speak out of their personal interests and expertise. To give one example, we did a session on surviving stress in which a trainee pilot described his feelings when things go wrong in the simulator, and a lawyer spoke about a case that has been unresolved for more than a decade. Then a specialist in treating people who have had heart attacks provided the star turn. She described the physiology of stress and gave practical tips on how to monitor stress levels and manage daily pressures. Finally she gave a meditation on how Jesus handled pressures in his life. It was a superb evening, releasing every member's skills in a way that was far more rewarding than me giving a talk on stress.

9) Looking with outsiders' eyes

We try to discipline ourselves to review our worship services from the perspective of a non-Christian, trying to identify the many ways in which Sunday customs exclude the visitor – often needlessly and quite by accident.

10) Core Values from Acts

As we explored Luke's description of the church in Jerusalem we identified eight core values that promote holistic growth. Since we want to be a church that grows in quality as well as quantity, we were pleased to make these values our own, developing alongside each value a related growth goal. These core values shape our development and keep us on track. From time to time we conduct a self-appraisal in which everyone in the church scores us from 1 to 5 on each core value, so that we can monitor our performance and invest in any areas of perceived weakness.

Whole life discipleship

We want to grow deeper as disciples

Inclusive fellowship

We want to grow warmer as brothers and sisters

Breaking of bread

We want to grow closer to God

Impactful prayer

We want to grow stronger in

God's resources

Active commitment

We want to grow more generous in service

Vibrant worship

We want to grow more open to God

Attractive lifestyle

We want to grow more seeker-friendly

Fruitful witness

We want to grow more believers

In my own ministry, Kairos is the most rewarding and demanding experience of church I have ever had. Sometimes it feels like a dream that is coming true. Sometimes it feels like walking a high wire with no safety net. When you start from scratch, nothing is guaranteed: buildings, income, musicians, and so on. When you start with small numbers, and with no profile in the local area, visitors are incredibly important. And I have enjoyed an added receptiveness when I am providing training for fellow church leaders, since I am now seen as someone thoroughly involved at the sharp end, and not "just a theorist", who knows the experiences of a small church and church planting first hand.

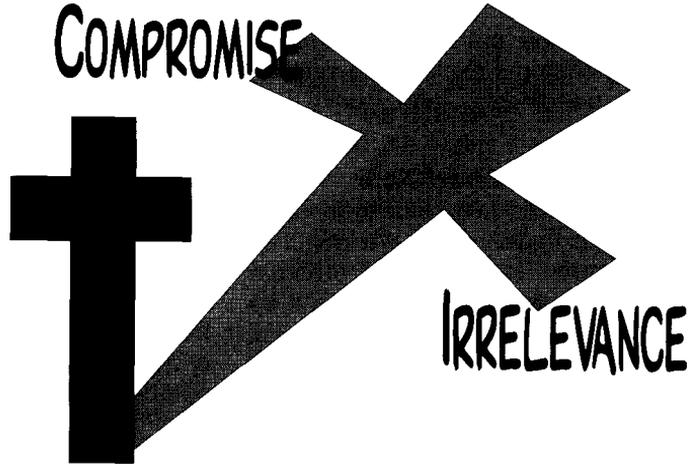
So how significant is Kairos? For me it's revolutionary. For all of us involved it's a wonderful and thrilling adventure.

Church from scratch is also life to the full! But do we have anything to offer the wider church in the way the French leader proposed? Only time will tell.



Rob Warner

THE PATH BETWEEN



My friend Bryan Clarke used to pastor a 500-member church in Broken Bow, Nebraska. However, effective evangelism was a real problem for the church. The reason was a simple one, Broken Bow only had a population of 800! Every citizen had heard the gospel so many times that it was like water of a duck's back! This is not exactly our problem in present day Britain.

The decline in attendance at worship services in the UK has been dramatic and much talked about, accelerating to a loss of 22% in the nine years 1989-98. Indeed, the number of all under-15's in contact with the church has fallen from 25% to 19%, and only 5% of twenty-something's ever attend worship in England.¹ The speed of this fall in numbers has led many to ask serious questions regarding its causes and how it can be reversed.

In response, on one hand, many hold the nostalgic belief that, if they only pray, wait faithfully, and remain true to the tradition they received, the Lord will make tomorrow like

yesterday and the "good old days" they remember. Others, recognising that the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a vastly different place from that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, look for fundamental changes to address the new cultural context in which we live.

So, what to do? A while ago a friend raved to me about the exciting book he was reading by David Bosche, *Transforming Mission*. I had never been that interested in Missiology. At College I had pigeonholed it as the subject for those called to minister overseas - and that certainly wasn't me! But Bosche hooked me

and I began to read more. I went back to Leslie Newbigin too and reread him through new eyes. He was addressing exactly the issues that were now concerning me as a pastor, that longing to connect the gospel to the unchurched culture around us.

Having spent nearly thirty years in India, on his return home Newbigin began to apply the principles he had learned on the mission field to Western culture. He was shocked that the application of missiological insights had been so largely ignored, especially given the difficult situation facing Western Christendom. In his analysis the task facing the church was for it to retrieve the integrity of its identity as a missionary presence in contemporary society.

*"This will entail learning to understand this culture from a missionary perspective - its controlling myths and plausibility structure - and discerning the relevance of the fullness of the gospel in this culture."*ⁱⁱ

In a nutshell, cross-cultural mission is no longer just the preserve of overseas missions, we need to become "*cross-cultural missionaries*" too because of the secularised nature of Western culture. As Graham Crayⁱⁱⁱ has sagely remarked,

"In every era and society the Christian Church faces the challenge of contextualisation - ensuring that the gospel is being relevantly addressed to its culture from within..."

Contextualisation is the pre-eminent missiological insight that Newbigin

felt was vital for the British church. He suggested that in such a "*missionary encounter*" a triangular model was required to understand the relationship of the gospel to culture. This is because he discerned three cultures at work in any encounter - the culture of Christ and the Bible; the missionary's own culture; and the receptor culture.^{iv} Further, he observes that

"The Spirit always converts by an embodied form of the gospel, never by some 'distilled, pure, unadulterated' gospel, ... The crucial insight here is that the embodied form which is involved in the encounter is that formed primarily in terms of the receptor culture, not the missionaries culture."^v

By implication a clear principle emerges, any gospel-culture encounter should strive to leave converted individuals from a different culture in churches that are "*culturally authentic and genuinely Christian*".^{vi} However, that leaves us on the horns of a dilemma, contextualise too much and you run the risk of syncretism, contextualise too little and you remain irrelevant. In our approach to reaching contemporary culture we are faced with the equal but opposite evils of compromise or obscurantism, a comfortable and familiar message or one that is veiled and hidden and makes no sense.

According to Patrick Sookhdeo, the notorious "*Nine O'clock Service*" in Sheffield had contextualised itself so

successfully into post-modern culture that it came to reproduce the cultural attitudes of that culture. Its moral values became subjective and determined solely by self-interest, thus initiating its ultimately high profile demise.^{vii}

On the other side is the ominous threat of irrelevance, and many times it is not merely a threat! Its challenge can be even more threatening to us because it strikes at the core of our religious experience. Because we came to Christ within our own culture, it is perilously easy for us to begin to confuse our own culture with the message of the gospel itself. As Bosche shrewdly observes,

"The problem was that the advocates of mission were blind to their own ethnocentrism. They confused their middle-class ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity. Their views about morality, respectability, order, efficiency, individualism, professionalism, work, and technological progress, having been baptised long before, were without compunction exported to the ends of the earth."^{viii}

The theological key to contextualisation has to be the incarnation, indeed it is the "one supreme missiological model".^{ix} For David Bosch, taking the incarnation seriously means that the Word must become flesh in every new context. As profound as this concept may seem, it is as simple in application as

asking the WWJD question – "What Would Jesus Do?" Contextualisation is simply a local Christian community connecting the Gospel message to real life. How would Jesus behave in our situation? What would he teach here and now? What would his values and emotions be if he lived among us? What would his underlying premises, attitudes, and drives be if he belonged to the community that we are dealing with? Yet this simplicity is so often compromised by the coloured tints we adopt for our cultural spectacles.

For me as a preacher, one of the most significant things to realise has been how important language is in contextualisation. Lamin Sanneh maintains that it is the most fundamental element of any culture.

"...language is the intimate, articulate expression of culture, and so close are the two that language can be said to be synonymous with culture which it suffuses and embodies."^x

If I am to communicate to those who have little or no experience of our church culture, what I say has to be stripped of any hint of the "language of Zion". Rather, it must find its roots in the sitting rooms of "Friends", the offices of "Ally McBeal" and the bar of "The Old Vic".

Newbigin considers the events of Pentecost to be a divine "baptism of the languages" as people from a score of different nations hear the mighty works of God communicated to them in their own tongue. This is an event that gives biblical warrant to

the claim that God accepts different languages and the various cultures to which they give voice.^{xi} If the gospel is to “make sense” or “come alive” for those to whom it is addressed it must be communicated in their language and clothed in symbols that are meaningful to them. While the danger of accommodation to the recipient culture remains,

“True contextualisation accords to the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgement and grace.” xii

In June 1997 the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation called a consultation entitled, “Gospel Contextualisation Revisited” which was held in Haslev, Denmark. Seeking a deeper understanding of contextualisation the consultation was to conclude with a strong challenge to the evangelical community world-wide to adopt an “attitude of risk taking” in engaging the good news of the gospel with the cultures in which we live and work. In their final communiqué attention was drawn to three themes that participants felt needed to be addressed.

The first theme was the temptation for contextualisation to be treated as much as a methodology of communication or strategy for cross-cultural mission. Their challenge was for contextualisation to become a way of life and a way of discovering the

fullness of the gospel through its living encounter with the worlds in which we live. Rather than a strategy they ask for it to be a necessary practice for all churches in mission with their own culture.

Their second challenge was for Christians to deal with their fear and lack of faith in the power of the gospel and God’s faithfulness. This fear is expressed in the concern that contextualisation may compromise doctrinal formulations and truncate God’s message, and results in an overprotective conservatism that does not fully trust the Lord.

The temptation to see one’s own culture as a superior expression of faith was the subject of their third theme. Such an attitude leads to a cultural dominance that fails to recognise its own blind spots as well as failing to acknowledge the truths that the Holy Spirit brings through other cultures.

Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, Graham Cray, gets the final word in this article when he writes,

“As Christendom ends, churches in the West have to address the gulf between church and the culture of the surrounding society. Church culture is often seen as an outdated leftover. There must be no substantial cultural gap between the two cultures, other than a moral one.”^{xiii}

NOTES:

ⁱ Peter Brierley. 1999. UK Christian Handbook, 0.3-0.4. London: Harper Collins.

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- ii Shenk, Wilbert R. 1998. "Leslie Newbigin's Contribution to the Theology of Mission", 6. In Transmission, Special Edition Tribute to Leslie Newbigin.
- iii Graham Cray, ed. 1997. The Post Evangelical Debate, 2. London: Triangle.
- iv Hunsberger, George R. 1998. Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality, 237-38. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- v Hunsberger, 241.
- vi Kraft, Charles H. 1980. "The Church in Culture: A Dynamic Equivalence Model", 214. In Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture, ed. Stott, John & Coote, Robert. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- vii Sookhdeo, Patrick. "Issues in Contextualisation", 4. World Evangelization, No 80, Sept-Oct 1997.
- viii Bosch, 294.
- ix Nicholls, Bruce J. 1979. A Theology of Gospel and Culture, 66. Downers Grove: IVP.
- x Sanneh, Lamin. 1996. Translating the Message, 3. Maryknoll, Orbis.
- xi Newbigin, Leslie. 1990. The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, 185. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- xii Newbigin, Pluralist, 152.
- xiii Cray, Graham. "Methods of Communication and contextualisation", 14. World Evangelization 80, Sept-Oct 1997.
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Culture Gap Quote 4.

This incarnational dimension, of the gospel being 'en-fleshed', 'em-bodied' in a people and its culture, of a 'kind of ongoing incarnation' ... is very different from any model that had been in vogue for over a thousand years. In this paradigm, it is not so much a case of the church being expanded, but of the church being born anew in each new context and culture. (David Bosch)

Items for the unfinished agenda

Stimulating thinking about mission



Angry protesters blockading fuel depots....

Roads blocked by motorists queuing to get petrol....

Supermarket shelves emptied by panic shoppers...

Vigilantes demanding that paedophiles should be moved off their estate...

Such images are symptoms of a society where anger, panic, and fear, lurk menacingly beneath a veneer of respectability. Signs of a society where self-interest takes precedence over the needs of the wider community. Indicators of a society that has lost its way because it has forgotten the story of the God who loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. ***Recent events are yet another reminder of a world in need of redemption and hope. A changing world where mission is the church's unfinished agenda.***

The shelves of Christian bookshops usually carry a good range of practical books packed with suggestions about how the local church can engage in effective mission. In addition to those titles there is a growing body of literature, which seeks to stimulate our thinking about the theology under-girding the practice of mission. The purpose of this article is to identify some of these resources which can help to

stimulate your thinking about, and your practice of, mission. If you are willing to explore the shape of a contemporary theology of mission then here are some books to guide you on the way.

(Full details of all the books mentioned are listed at the end of the article.)

The Theology of Mission.

Many Christians know of the South African author David Bosch, and borrow his language about paradigms of mission. My suspicion is that only a much smaller group of people make the effort to work their way through his *magnum opus*, ***Transforming Mission***. This is a pity because this contemporary classic is crammed with significant insights into mission. In over 500 pages Bosch supplies a readable survey of the ways in which the church has consistently adapted its theology of mission in order to meet new challenges. He also identifies some of the key elements needed for

an effective contemporary paradigm of mission. The book can be criticised for neglecting to pay due attention to women's contribution to the missionary task, and for failing to give sufficient weight to the growing impact of Pentecostalism upon mission. Nevertheless this is the most comprehensive study of the theology of mission which is currently available. It is an inspiring work, which is well worth buying, reading and re-reading. The recent book by J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission?: Theological Explorations*, complements Bosch by opening up some other perspectives on mission.

Mission in the 20th Century

Anything by Lesslie Newbigin is worth reading but I have particularly enjoyed his autobiography, *Unfinished Agenda*. It not only offers fascinating glimpses into his life and thought, but it also provides a useful introduction to the ways in which mission thinking has developed in the last 50 years. A key feature during that period has

been the contribution of the Lausanne Movement, and its key documents are conveniently presented in *Making Christ Known*, edited by John Stott. A detailed account of mission trends during the 20th century can be found in T. Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*.

A shift in Christianity's centre of gravity

There is growing recognition that the centre of gravity for Christianity has moved south of the equator to lands where the church is growing rapidly. In an increasingly multicultural world a knowledge of what the Spirit is doing in other lands is essential if we are to engage in effective mission in Britain. If the vibrant growth of the church in places like Africa is to be a source of renewal for the tired church in the affluent West, then we

need to begin to listen to some significant voices from the two-thirds world.

Kwame Bediako is one of Africa's leading theologians. His *Christianity in Africa* will not only alert you to why the church has taken root so readily in African soil, but will also provoke you into thinking about mission on the home front.

At a more popular level, Vincent Donovan's *Christianity Rediscovered* tells the story of a Catholic missionary working amongst the Masai people of east Africa. In a very moving way he describes the ways in which he sought to

Christianity and other faiths

As Britain has become a religiously pluralist society it is essential that our thinking about mission addresses Christianity's relation to people of other faiths. At this point particularly we can learn from brothers and sisters in the two-thirds world who have much more experience of living and working alongside people of other faiths. In this context it is interesting to see how, from a Sri offers a thorough and demanding Lankan perspective, Vinoth Ramachandra critique of religious pluralism in his book *The Recovery of Mission*. Also of interest is his *Faiths in*

Holistic Mission

If Jesus came to bring 'good news to the poor' then an adequate theology of mission must embody a holistic response to the needs of the poor. Ronald Sider challenged many Christians in the 1970s and 80s about this part of Christian discipleship through his *Rich Christians in an Age*

Globalisation

By the year 2010 some estimate that 75% of the world's population will live in cities. Whether we live in cities or not we are all affected by the urban culture transmitted by the media and the multinationals. *The Impact of the*

communicate the gospel to people in ways they could understand. Reading this stirs me up to think deeply about what is involved in communicating clearly to people in my own community.

Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multi-cultural World, based on his 1998 London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity.

Sitting on my desk in college at the moment is *The Meeting of religions and the Trinity* by Gavin D'Costa. According to the blurb this important new book 'develops a sharp and penetrating critique of the pluralist position.' I shall see how accurate that description is as I work through the book with some M Th students over the coming months.

of Hunger. I hope that the updated edition of this classic book will have an equally challenging and disturbing impact. Another pathway into this territory is Dewi Hughes' *God of the Poor: A biblical vision of God's Present Rule*.

Global: An Urban Theology is a brief but valuable reflection on these issues written by Bishop Laurie Green.

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about... Peter Cotterell, John Driver, Melba Maggay, Lamin Sanneh, Wilbert Shenk, Andrew Walls... and many others; but if you would like a more detailed list of books on mission themes please contact me at:-

Spurgeon's College, 189, South Norwood Hill, London SE25 6DJ.

Email: p.stevenson@spurgeons.ac.uk

Books referred to in the article.

- Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1995).
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Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, (London: Hodder, 1997).
John R. W. Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996).
Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Culture Gap Quote 5.

God's way of working for relating, revealing and being understood is to contextualize his messages within the language, culture, and thought forms of the people he seeks to reach.

(Charles Kraft)

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