

CREATION CULTURE AND CHARISMATICS

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INTRODUCTION

There is no need for me, I trust, to define the charismatic movement to an audience such as this. In its twenty-five or more years on the religious scene it has not only developed international networks and centres, but also deeply infiltrated (a word I use with no sinister connotation) the life of the churches from Roman Catholic right across to independent Protestant groupings. Conferences are held and a constant stream of popular books written by charismatic leaders appears. Scholars examine the literature, the groupings and the attitudes of charismatic Christians.

Certainly the charismatic movement has been one of the major factors influencing the development of English evangelicalism over the past two decades. Amongst the mass of evaluative literature, the wayfaring Christian like myself will be especially grateful for two judicious and handy works. I find myself referring constantly to Gospel and Spirit (1977) produced by a group of evangelical Anglicans (of which I had the honour to be one), and to Dr J.I. Packer's article on Charismatic Renewal: Pointing to a Person and a Power published in Christianity Today in March 1980.

While it would be ludicrous to attempt to assess the movement in a short paper such as this, even were I competent to do so, it is worth drawing attention at the outset to some strands in its on-going life and spirituality and its contribution to evangelical testimony. As Gospel and Spirit pointed out, "the charismatic movement in the United Kingdom has evangelical roots, but it is now both transdenominational and trans-traditional, and embraces a very wide spectrum of views, attitudes and practices, not all originating from a recognisable evangelical 'stable'." This aspect causes much concern to those in the settled tradition of Reformation theology and piety. To many, its leaders and some of its theological stances are already dangerously (if not hopelessly) compromised by their apparently carefree association with liberal theology as well as with Roman Catholics, who have moved not one step away from their traditional doctrines. All the non-episcopal Protestants see evangelical Anglicans as already seriously compromised by their membership of a church which is unjustifiably 'mixed', thanks to the professed views of a significant proportion of its bishops, theologians and bureaucrats who have flirted with, if not espoused, Unitarian theology, prelatical autocracy, a Tridentine soteriology and the secular ethical package offered (for example) by The Guardian, comprising roughly abortion on demand, euthanasia by request, mildly Marxist politics, Keynesian economics, British imperial guilt, the world over-population scare, nuclear pacifism, divorce by consent and the public defence of sodomy as an acceptable activity. An Anglican evangelicalism already co-habiting with churchmen of those convictions will be said by some to be hopelessly contaminated already, without the further step of tolerating allegedly heterodox doctrines of sanctification. But if we tolerate the new Pentecostalism, (such Reformed critics will say with a grim smile) it will scarcely seem surprising. My own position is, as you may know, that of an Anglican by conviction who grieves over the faithlessness of the leadership in his church at many points, and is doing his best to remedy some of the damage. So perhaps you will not be surprised to know that I do not reject the charismatic movement out of hand either. Let me first say something, however, to show that I am at least aware of the problems, many of them acute, raised in our churches from time to time by charismatic renewal. I will then turn to some more positive suggestions.

Broadly this movement seems to me to have affected church life in two ways.

To the charismatic movement must be attributed first a fresh energy to the irrational element and to emotionalism in religious attitudes and activities. This is seen both in individual piety and in public worship. There is an abandonment of critical scrutiny, and an almost total abnegation of rational caution, whether in private glossolalia or in lengthy un-shaped sessions of worship and praise. There is a lack of appreciation of the God-given conscious artistry of the great hymnwriters of the past, of the treasures of liturgy, and of the wealth of sacred music. The contemporary and the childish are deliberately cultivated for their spontaneity. Guidance too comes less by rational discussion, moral discrimination and an examination of principles, cases and consequences; it is more a matter of feeling, hearing voices and seeing 'pictures' (the word vision tends to be avoided). This irrational and emotional emphasis can be seen in other aspects of the movements, but enough has been said to indicate the general drift, which is well-known.

The second effect is the elitist attitude which is very often found in charismatic groupings and churches. The claim is made that they are experiencing that which is the birthright of all Christians - the church life of the Acts of the Apostles and the worship like that of the church at Corinth to whom Paul wrote. Miracles take place in answer to prayer; the gifts of the Spirit are once more manifested amongst us. Inevitably, those who doubt the validity of some or any of these claims, who are sceptical, or who for one reason or another have not experienced similar blessings, are seen as second class. This leads to self-righteousness and disruption in all but the most mature and loving fellowships. Many local churches have known bitterness and schism as the final result.

Yet having said all this, there seems no doubt that genuine Holy Spirit blessing has come to countless individuals, and even to whole churches, through the advent of the charismatic movement. Many have been reached and soundly converted through charismatic witness. Thousands (perhaps more) have found their personal piety refreshed and reinvigorated by reading charismatic books or attending charismatic conferences. The personal lives of many Christians have been cleansed and healed, often after years of deadness or spiritual unfaithfulness. Families have been restored to health and made into happily functioning units. Social responsibility has increased and its impact has been considerable, even if unsophisticated in its perception of issues and naive in its approach (I am often asked for a list of "all Christian M.P.'s" for a charismatic prayer group!). And although sometimes obsessive in its demonology, there is a genuinely healthy awareness of evil among charismatics which causes them to call upon the name of Jesus, and to perceive the roots of much motivation in a way which their more judicious evangelical brethren have sometimes failed to do.

The benefits therefore, of the charismatic movement have been considerable, and I could list other useful results if time allowed. I would only add at this point that we ought not to be surprised that the hand of God has been manifestly upon so many individuals and groups associated with this movement. The reason is that in its simple - perhaps naive - theology - the movement is concerned to honour GOD - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I am aware that a former Director of the Fountain Trust has suggested that God the Father needs re-emphasis if we are to achieve a Scriptural balance. Nevertheless, the charismatic movement exalts Christ, who is in the bosom of the Father, and we know that men are intended to honour the Son even as they honour the Father (Jn.5:22-23, 14:10-11). A simple love of Jesus is the heart of charismatic piety, and the background to their glorification of the Mediator is an orthodox Trinitarian theology. Furthermore, despite what we might justifiably see as a naivety in methods of exegesis, the charismatic approach to the Bible involves loving God's Word and taking Him at His word. The challenge of faith is seen as an adventure. The

Christian is called to launch out and see whether God will not bless His word and His servants who are trusting it, sometimes frighteningly literally! Is it any wonder that this kind of devotion manifestly enriches believers? It is, after all, part of our own evangelical heritage, as a glance at the lives of Whitefield or C.T. Studd demonstrates.

It is perhaps enlightening to see as a judgement upon an arid evangelical piety on the one hand, and upon pan-denominational attempts to regain a better ecclesiastical grip upon communal life by church leaders without a submission to God's Word on the other. Dr Packer put it well towards the end of his article in Christianity Today:

The movement is forcing all Christendom to ask what it means to be a Christian, and to be Spirit-filled. It is bringing into recognisably evangelical experience people whose ears were closed to evangelical witness as such. As 'egg-head' radical theology invites the church into the wilderness of a new Unitarianism, is it not (dare I say) just like God to have raised up against it not a new Calvin or Owen, but a scratch movement that proclaims the Deity and potency of the Son and the Spirit - not by great theological acumen or accuracy, but by the evidence of renewed lives and lifestyle? A movement which by its very existence reminds both the world and the church that Christianity in essence is not words but a Person and a power? Surely we see divine strategy here."

In the light of these features which I have so inadequately sketched and summarised, it should be clear that when traditional Reformation evangelicals have come upon the charismatic movement for the first time they have felt sometimes encouraged, sometimes challenged and sometimes threatened - often all three at the same time. And the results of such encounters in the wider Protestant world have been the breaking of moulds - new insights, new alliances and new doubts have emerged. The socio-ecclesiastical pattern has become more fluid, and so too has the theological and doctrinal atmosphere. At some points we now speak hesitantly where once we spoke dogmatically, and at others (thank God) we now affirm with joyful certainty where once we only spoke cautiously or, at best, with a grim hope. The rest of this paper will be given over to some reflexions - many of them obvious, but nevertheless important, I feel - on the changing stance of some Reformed evangelicals in England in the light of our encounter with the charismatic movement. We have, I believe, been invited to a re-examination of certain aspects of our theology and of our style of religious expression.

As I have asked myself how and in what respects charismatic Christian emphases have enriched the church, I have more than once suspected that one important clue lies in the doctrine of creation. Now I know of no work in English or any other language written by a theologian of charismatic sympathies dealing with the doctrine of creation. But I am not entirely surprised, nevertheless, when a whole host of small and apparently insignificant events cohere in my memory around this doctrinal focus. For I recall that it was by the brooding Spirit of the Lord that creation as a process began its stately motion (Gen.1:2), that the hosts of heaven were made by the breath of the Lord's mouth (Ps.33:6), and that the heavens were made fair by that same breath (Job.26:13). The work of the Holy Spirit in creation (of which Kuyper makes much in his magnum opus) is the ordering, vivifying, beautifying and perfecting of that which the Father had decreed, and of which Christ was the principal Agent. It is therefore not surprising that a movement taken up with the Holy Spirit (though in a way which many might think dangerously obsessive) should uncover for us some truths about the Christian's attitude to creation which had been neglected in

recent centuries.

One aspect of the immediacy of the Christian awareness of God as Father is the acceptance of His providence. At its best, charismatic Christian experience encourages the believer to look at the world about him and say "Thank you Lord" for each good and lovely thing which the Father designed and holds in being. This is a profoundly Christian awareness. It is pre-rational and instinctive, and it is something which is rescued and re-made from the ruin of fallen human nature when a man or a woman is born again. I have noticed that charismatic fellowship helps it to grow. The believer is encouraged consciously to accept God's good gifts in nature, in people and in human artefacts, to delight in them unashamedly, to share them with others and to thank God for them. The apostle reminded Timothy that everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving (1 Tim.4:4); this world-affirming principle seems to me to be a valuable contribution to contemporary evangelical spirituality.

As in so many other fields, the more thoughtful Christian will remind me that we must be seeking a right balance. Are we not also warned that all that is in the world consists of "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life", that these are not of the Father, doomed to pass away and may constitute a rival allegiance to such a degree that the love of the Father cannot co-exist with loving the world (1 Jn.2:15-17)? This is indeed authentic Christian reading - but what is meant by 'the world'? The pagan mind-set (kosmos) referred to by the Apostle John was not only felt in the three lusts mentioned, but was sensed by all the New Testament writers as the driving principle behind pagan culture of the Graeco-Roman world, and embodied in many of its institutions. Nevertheless, the New Testament nowhere presents the material creation as evil, nor all human institutions as unrecognisably distorted. It is significant that in this same context where Paul urges Timothy to thankful acceptance of God's creation gifts, two specific items are mentioned - food and marriage. One is a material thing, the other an intangible institution. Asceticism was a threat - doubtless from Gnostic and/or Ebionite sources - even while the New Testament was being written, and Paul would have none of it. There were, of course, voluntary self-disciplines rightly undertaken by individuals; by virtue of which they denied themselves items which they might properly have enjoyed, in order to attain a particular spiritual goal or for a period of particular spiritual concentration. But there was no general rule, nor any suggestion of second-class spirituality in those who did not renounce such things, or renounced them only temporarily (as in fasting, which Our Lord Himself enjoined).

Reformation Christianity faced a Herculean task when it took over the spiritual leadership in so many European countries in the 16th and 17th centuries. The first problem was ignorance. People needed to be taught the Gospel and the nature of true Christian obedience. Because the way of salvation in scripture was so different from the decadent works-righteousness of the Roman system, some centuries-old falsehoods had to be eradicated, and other distorted emphases re-fashioned in their true Biblical context. This took time. It is scarcely surprising that the Reformers of the first generation did not always get things right. A glance at the Introduction to the Marriage Service in the Book of Common Prayer will show the back-log of suspicion and the grudging acceptance of sexual relations as poor second best, something for which last-minute emergency provision had been made by the Creator after the Fall. Not all the service transmits this message, of course, but some key phrases in the important introduction echo all the medieval suspicions of human sexuality and the superiority of celibacy.

With the advent of the Evangelical Revival, another strand of strenuous self-denial was added to the evangelical tradition, particularly through the teaching of Wesley, who was not nick-named 'Methodist' for nothing. The discipline of his pre-conversion years in the Holy Club at Oxford fashioned a mould from which Wesley was never to break completely free. Abstinence from legitimate enjoyment easily becomes an end in itself, virtuous irrespective of motive or purpose. The rigours of John Wesley's educational prescription for schoolboys are well-known; they suggest a positive merit in regime of a severe deprivation (by most standards) of play, sleep, food and recreation. Wesley's defence was that "Scripture, reason and experience jointly testify that, in as much as the corruption of nature is earlier than our instructions can be, we should take all pains and care to counteract this corruption as early as possible. The bias of nature is set the wrong way. Education is designed to set it right. This, by the grace of God, is to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge and the love of the world to resignation, lowness, meekness and the love of God" (Works 13, 436-7). Fifty years before he published these words in *A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children*, his mother Susannah had written "In order to form the minds of children the first thing to be done is to conquer their will and bring them to an obedient temper." The school at Kingswood which Wesley founded in 1748 was calculated to do just that. The day started at 4 a.m. There were no sports, no leisure time, and very few holidays.

Though the social history of English evangelicalism remains to be written, it is worth speculating whether the aggressive Philistinism of the 'keener' evangelicals in the latter part of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century is the legacy, not of the Reformers and Puritans, but rather of the Spartan regime of Wesley and some of the eighteenth century evangelicals. Certainly English evangelicalism became more attractive when sport was added to the list of approved activities. Bodily exercise - so much favoured by the English boarding school system in view of its supposed character-training properties - became a permitted activity as the influence of Thomas Arnold spread.

Beneath all this lurk some profound theological issues. We maintain that man is a fallen creature - fallen but not as bad as he could possibly be. Total depravity is not total in the sense that our humanity is distorted out of all recognition, but that every aspect of human existence has suffered, to a degree, the fatal infection of sin. The image is defaced not effaced; marred but not obliterated. Man is a noble ruin, and the adjective (noble) as well as the noun (ruin) must be made to count in our thinking. The fact that the Roman system made the effects of sin seem less than Scripture assured us they were (and are) is no good reason for any attempt to exaggerate them beyond Scriptural warrant. Similarly, the creation around us is subject to vanity, and groans in its longing for its cleansing and restoration; this does not imply that it sets its snares for the unwary at every turn, or that in admiring our Creator's handiwork in it we are inevitably led into temptation. There is a right use of the created order, and part of that use is the joyous acceptance of all that is good and beautiful in it. There are some unworthy suspicions which have lurked for generations among English Evangelical pietists and Scottish Calvinists alike. Modern studies of Luther and Calvin which have painted the great Reformers in the round have done something to correct earlier, bleaker pictures; so too have the writings of Francis Schaeffer.

Another aspect of the doctrine of creation is undoubtedly the importance of variety within the ordered categories of human existence. As a student I can still recall a gifted Christian art student explaining to me that every tree was a different tree as well as belonging to a botanical category which emphasized its solidarity with a whole class of trees which were

genetically identical. This, she stressed to me, gave each tree its own particular characteristics, just like human beings. There was a glorious and inexhaustible diversity, constantly giving us surprises and thrills of pleasure as we met and became acquainted with new trees. I have never looked at trees in quite the same way since that conversation. I thank God for opening my eyes. God had willed it so, and we may rejoice in this wonderful variety.

I do not know whether the multitude of forms which living things adopt has become a leading theme in charismatic preaching or writing. I suspect it has not, or I should have noticed it somewhere. But there is an allied theme which has strong theological links with the doctrine of creation at this point. It is in fact the simple extension of the assertion of created variety to the human level. People are created different. They should not be shaped into the same moulding by a strong process of regimentation or organisation, but rather helped to be themselves as God made them. Here we find one of the main themes which have been reiterated to the point of almost becoming slogans - the well-known emphasis on 'every member of the ministry'. In fact all that is being asserted here is the perfectly orthodox and well-known point that there is a variety of gifts in the church and that each Christian has his or her part to play in the Body of Christ. None is dispensable, everyone has 'a ministry'. It is the task of the whole fellowship to cherish its members so that they find what their contribution is, and then give them encouragement to develop their particular ministry. We see this variety, in other words, in the context of redemption rather than in the context of creation. Yet significantly the point is most powerfully made in the childish ditty which has become known outside charismatic circles, and relentlessly taught to children in Sunday schools and Bible classes all over the country. I refer of course to the "Butterfly Song", in which the singer pretends to be a different animal in each verse, and then thanks God for making him just what he is ("Thank you Lord for making me me!").

There is no doubt that this is rightly seen as a Creation truth as well as a Redemption truth; at this point the one reinforces the other by happy analogy, and the one becomes a teaching method for the other. The wider implications are enormous. It is the artist and the poet who see the items of our created world in their particularity. It is one special sunset or statue, willow tree or whale, landscape or lioness which the painter or the poet capture and help us to experience with them. If our doctrine of creation had been richer and fuller, the evangelical community would surely have produced more poets, artists, novelists and musicians than it has.

At the level of the communal life of the church, the implications are being actively explored in local churches. Undoubtedly the charismatic movement has loosened up the rather formal approaches to pastoral work and fellowship meetings; under its influence, there is far more laughing together, crying together and rejoicing together, which would have pleased the Apostle Paul in the light of Rom.12:15. English people do not easily share their problems and their grief; Scottish people, I would guess, even less so. Yet if the fellowship is to mean anything, we need to know each other in our particularity. We have different strengths and different weaknesses - we ought to let each other know about both. This can only happen where people are valued for what they are as God made them; though marred by sin, the Holy Spirit will be doing a work within them to restore the image, to heal the scars, to create a Christian uniquely useful in the fellowship where he or she has been providentially set. These emphases come over more strongly in charismatic circles than in more traditional evangelical groupings and (as I have tried to show) they go right back to our God-given creation diversity.

One interesting problem which admits of no easy or univocal solution is that of alcoholic drink. As is well-known, the association of evangelicalism with total abstinence is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Denominationally the Salvation Army has always been teetotal, as was the nineteenth-century Methodism from which it sprang. But in earlier generations, despite the horrors of the gin age, it was alcohol abuse rather than its moderate or occasional use which was regarded with repugnance. It can of course be argued that the extent of addiction has now become such a national (and indeed international) problem that the only socially responsible thing for Christians to do is to adopt a policy of total abstinence. The facts are frightening, the deaths so numerous (especially when accidents involving driving with alcohol in the bloodstream are taken into consideration) that the church may be called upon to take up a new position. Hitherto however the majority of churches have been tolerant of the right to use (i.e. moderate use) of alcoholic drink. But evangelicals in this century, certainly in Britain, managed to convey the message "Rarely if at all" - i.e. total abstinence in practice if not in principle - to young people in Bible classes, camps and elsewhere. At this point the charismatic movement has been more permissive than the rather narrower evangelicalism from which it sprang. This has been due not so much to the ethical declassifying of public houses as permitted places for evangelism (which has happened to some degree) but much more in the domestic field in relation to wine drunk with meals. There are pros and cons here. Wine carries, measure for measure, a far higher alcohol content than beer, though larger quantities of beer are drunk in public houses than wine with meals, whether in restaurants or at home. Again it can rightly be pointed out that wine drunk with food is far less likely to affect the central nervous system than alcoholic drink taken alone in a communal setting such as a bar. At a theological level there is no doubt that the Bible contains explicit teaching both that wine makes glad the heart and is to be accepted as a good gift (indeed it appears as a symbol of both joy and prosperity in the Old Testament on many occasions) and as a digestive aid, yet also that strong drink can be a terrible snare which can ruin a young man's life and destroy the dignity and modesty of the older generation (Genesis 9). Certainly habitual drunkenness was regarded as a sign of pagan moral corruption and excluded a man from the kingdom of God in apostolic teaching (1 Pet.4:3, Gal.5:21, 1 Thess.5:7, Rom.13:13, etc.). Here perhaps is one problem which we can only for the moment leave to the individual conscience.

In the field of sexual relations the charismatic movement presents us with a paradox. On the one hand there has been a welcome re-statement of the plain teaching of Scripture about the nature of marriage and human diversity. These are given creation truths. The different and complementary natures of man and woman have been reasserted in the strongest terms. One of the most popular of all evangelical books on family life has been that of the Lutheran charismatic minister Larry Christenson, The Christian Family. Much of the book is based upon a book by H.W.J Thiersch, Christian Family Life, first published in German in 1854. As might be guessed from its date of origin, it is Scriptural and patriarchal in approach. It was thus a counter-cultural blast on its first appearance in 1971 in the United States, where militant feminism was everywhere apparent. As Christenson puts it in his introduction: "We found ourselves calling into question many of the attitudes and practices of/in our present-day culture. Against the prevailing pattern of relativism and permissiveness, we began to see the Biblical concept of order and authority" (p.13). Adam's priority, male headship, the authority of the husband - all these are expounded and applied unashamedly as God-given. So the charismatic movement has at this point been conservative, even reactionary, some would say. Certainly the book comes as a shock to Guardian-reading Christian intellectuals in England, intent upon a cautious accommodation of the secular liberal consen-

sus with the main emphasis of Christian ethical teaching, but often a little too ready to take the hermeneutical way out of difficult and challenging texts which appear to be asserting views not easily tolerated in the corridors of the media establishment.

Hand in hand with this trend however has gone a very different influence. This springs from the concern that worship shall be genuine, and from the identification of authenticity with spontaneity (a disastrous error which we owe to Rousseau, as we do other equally damaging ideas in other fields). To equate the authentic with the spontaneous is of course to react against all order, and in particular to suspect liturgical or set forms for Christian meetings, especially those for public worship. Anglican evangelicals, who still hold - though tenuously - to the principle of a shared public liturgy, are less prone to err here, but the conferences, free-floating evangelists and teachers' monthly rallies, special all-day gatherings for fellowship or prayer all give ample scope for the Romantic approach to Christian worship, as Dr Packer has styled it. Now the unscripted and spontaneous approach is essentially the feminine approach, and it is noteworthy that the most accomplished leaders of this kind of worship are women. I have known some men, but only a very few, who have adopted this approach with success, one of them being the late Denis Clark.

There is, it seems to me, a place for each of these approaches in Christian devotional activity. If I am right in styling one approach (the spontaneous, improvised, slowly taking shape as we go on) as being essentially feminine, while the rational, ordered and logical framework approach is essentially masculine, then clearly each has its strengths and weaknesses, and - as with man and woman in human society - God's total provision is seen when both are present. Yet there seems to be a hidden assumption in many evangelical circles today, especially where inter-denominational gatherings are concerned, that the 'feminine approach' to worship is the only valid one, or somehow spiritually superior. Meetings for teaching are run on spontaneous worship lines, with the result that there is a conflict of styles and objectives. More subtly, Christian groups where the feminine approach prevails will tend to attract more gentle or less masculine young men, and confirm them in an attitude of Christian life, learning and discipleship which is at variance with the full sanctified development of their masculinity. In addition, more masculine Christians have been known to feel unsuited to worship and fellowship meetings run by those who favour the predominantly feminine approach, and have left churches and other groups where a more masculine style of worship and learning was sorely needed to balance the spontaneous and emotionally rich ethos of the group. Christian girls in particular have sensed the lack of what some of them call 'real Christian men' in inter-denominational Christian gatherings over the past decade. Younger Christians do not normally have the degree of perception to see the needs of any fellowship to which they belong in the light of church history and of theology. There is a challenge here for a fresh assessment of the constituent emphases of an all-round mature Biblical spirituality.

There is time for only one more field which needs sympathetic Christian analysis in the light of the fresh religious landscape created by the charismatic movement. This is a wider cultural phenomenon which invites more detailed sociological analysis than I am able to give it in this paper. But it is worth referring to all the same. I am thinking of the correlation of pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity with social class.

Modern twentieth century pentecostalism settled into institutional form in the first two decades of this century, the two main church groupings being the Elim Four-Square Gospel Churches and the Assemblies of God. It is

well-known that these are almost exclusively working-class churches, doing a valuable work in mainly down-town areas, often with pastors who have weekday jobs in full-time employment. The charismatic movement however has emerged from evangelicalism which is, like its parent body, largely middle class. Its message and distinctive ethos has been formed through conferences, magazines and similar initiatives. Its links with the pentecostal denominations, whose distinctive doctrines of sanctification it shares, have been occasional and particularly close. In the middle class areas of south-east England the 'house church' movement has flourished, creating structures different from the pentecostal denominations (who resemble classic nonconformist churches) but much more like a modern version of the Plymouth Brethren. I would judge that the Brethren themselves have always been largely middle class too. The result is that the total charismatic influence has been guided into three different channels - the pentecostal denominations (largely working class), the house churches and similar independent groups (largely middle class) and the charismatics in the mainline denominations (where the class characteristics are that of the denomination). It would be interesting to see whether the distinctive charismatic experience and church life was better able to bridge class barriers than other forms of evangelical witness. I would guess that it had this potential because of its emphasis upon acceptance of differences, and the strong welcome given to evidences of Christian leadership potential, insight, gifts of utterance, etc., irrespective of educational or social achievement of any other kind. The concomitant danger is of course the emergence of the spiritual autocrat, who, by force of personality (interpreted by him as a spiritual gift, and subsequently perceived as such by others) takes over the leadership and becomes a church dictator. Illuminist sectarian groups since Montanus have followed this pattern and the so-called radical reformation spawned many such groupings who appealed to Bible and Spirit. It is not surprising that the charismatic movement has produced its own intense 'fringe', a world of gurus and ghettos.

Nevertheless, the movement should be judged by its best fruits rather than by its worst. The small group of cultural and doctrinal questions I have examined show that Reformed believers have much to give and much to learn.