In the Eye of the Storm: Moving forward with confidence

Issue 21 Guest Editor: Martin Lee

Some people seem naturally so confident don't they, while others appear to be shrinking violets. Why is it that some of us seem to have no confidence, while others appear arrogant and opinionated?

We say we have confidence in God - in his love for us and his Good News for the world. Yet do we really have confidence in God himself - or is it in our own ability or Christian heritage? For those of us who lack confidence, why can't we seem to trust God more?

With the demise of Christendom, we seem to have lost our confidence, or was it a misplaced confidence based on power and influence? 'In the eye of the storm' was an attempt to debate how we can have a proper confidence in God so that we don't retreat into protecting ourselves from the storm around, or alternatively end up in arrogance and fundamentalism.

I hope you enjoy and are stimulated by the engagement as much as we were.

Martin Lee

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Wave Formation, Waves and Learning to Surf

Author: Revd Darrell Jackson, Tutor in European Studies and Director, Nova Research Centre, Redcliffe College.

Introduction

TV homebuyer series like, 'A place in the Sun', presented by Jasmine Harman and Jonnie Irwin, show how the home buyer market in the UK compares with the rest of Europe. Choices of home are offered and the buyers are left to choose: Merthyr Tydfil or the Dordogne.

The simple fact is: the UK is no longer isolated from the rest of Europe by La Manche – that's the English Channel to you and me. Trends and patterns cross the Continent – Information, Communication Technology ensure this in our globalised world.

Wave formation: the religious and social-cultural context of Europe

1. Varieties of Christianisation

I suspect that a fair number of us will be reading, or at least claim we are reading, authors such as Stuart Murray Williams (*Church after Christendom*, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*), David Smith (*Mission After Christendom*), Simon Bartley and Simon Barrow (*Ekklesia*), and Michael Frost (*Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*). Even our own Richard Tiplady's book *Post-Mission* touches on these themes.

Taken as a whole, their writing is persuasive and describes accurately what is observed in many instances. Additionally, their assessments seem to be those that many of us may instinctively share. However, the theories offered by prophets of secularisation seemed incontrovertible in the 1960s and onwards. The current consensus is that much of this may have been an attempt to describe the way that the world *ought* to be rather than the way it was. This is the current danger I see in trying to describe religion in Europe as necessarily conforming to a post-Christendom paradigm.

Why is it important to make this point, apart from the fact that it means there is still space for writing more books? If we are going to resist the pressure of the waves that seem to be overwhelming us then we need firstly to understand the nature of the wave. Any competent surfer will tell you that – I'm not a competent surfer.

So what can be said about the complex and confusing religious beliefs of Continental Europe as well as the UK?

2. Some of it is Pre-Secular

The Sami peoples (85,000): some retain their shamanistic religion although most have been Christianised. Four general Gods (including Daughter of God). Shamanism (practised by the Noaidi) is accompanied by drum beating and trance singing.

The Roma peoples (10 million): Nominal Christian affiliation is often supplemented by Roma traditional beliefs: the existence of bibaxt (bad luck) and of muló (supernatural spirits or ghosts), the power of good luck charms, amulets, talismans, curses, fortune telling (but only for non-Roma) and healing rituals. A person can be reincarnated as another human, animal, or muló or "living dead", seeking revenge on anyone who harmed him during his life on earth.

A Roma typically has three names. The first is known only by the mother; it is given at the time of birth. Its purpose is to confuse evil spirits by keeping the real name of the child from them. The second name is conferred at the time of baptism, and is the commonly used name within the tribe. A third, different name may be given when the child is re-baptized in a Christian church. It has little importance, except when dealing with non-Roma.

The indigenous Islamic populations of Europe are frequently syncretistic, with animistic practices accompanying occasional Islamic adherence (totalling just over 6 million). There are also numerous indigenous tribal groups of the Volga, and other remote Russian regions. Not to say that they are typical of European population, nor that they are somehow immune to the impact of the Gospel. In Spain, the majority of Roma are evangelical Christian.

3. You can find many Remnants of Christendom

In July 2001, the former king of Bulgaria, Simeon of Saxony-Cobourg, became the Prime Minister and made a point of taking the oath of office in the presence of Patriarch Maxim. The Bulgarian President, George Parvanov, also took the oath in January in the presence of the Patriarch. Bulgaria is an EU state.

In Greece, an EU state, Orthodoxy is the official state religion.

In Russia, Vladimir Putin's Institute monitoring Human Rights in the west parallels efforts of the ROC to develop a new Charter of Human Rights which are less individualistic, resist western secularisation, and respect 'Christian Values'.

In Denmark, an EU state, the Church and State exist in an incredible alliance, with a Government Minister appointed to the State Church Portfolio and wielding enormous power in the Lutheran Church. Atheists and Muslims must carry a picture of Christ with them whenever they travel abroad.

Romania, an EU state, counts an incalculable number of monasteries and sketes to which monastic vocations once again stream. With the tacit support of many in the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) the Romanian royal family is seeking a return to political influence and dominance.

Again, it's important to say that Christendom Europe seems to be fighting a rearguard action that may be more or less effective. It's too early to predict how welcome will be the current attempts by the RC church and the ROC to impact EU and Church of England policy and law making.

4. Some is clearly best described as 'Post-Christendom'

Alan Gilbert's 1980 book *The making of Post-Christian Britain* was followed by Michael Jinkin's *The Church Faces Death* in 1999, closely pursued by Callum Brown's *Death of Christian Britain* (2000). If the titles tell us anything it is that the Future might not have a Church. Countries that most closely reflect this situation include: UK, NL, FR, DE, BE.

Stuart Murray Williams suggests seven characteristics of post-Christendom:

Church moves from the centre to the margins

Christians in minority not majority

Christians become sojourners not settlers

Christians experience plurality not privilege

Christians relinquish control and embrace witness

The Church emphasises mission not maintenance

The Church moves from Institution to Movement

5. What does this all mean for mission agencies and mission personnel active in Europe?

My caution with regards the post-Christendom analysis is that it tends to do what earlier Church Planting advocates used to do (of which Stuart was one) when they insisted that Church Planting was the, 'single most effective way of doing evangelism on the face of the planet.' Post-Christendom is a helpful way of understanding some of the things happening in the UK and beyond, but it is not the complete picture and mission personnel shaped by these ideas will be less than effective in the parts of Europe that are pre-Christian or still Christendom countries.

If we can accept that 'Postmodern, post-Christendom' ways of thinking operate in a similar way to 'Modern Christian civilisation' ways of thinking, as part of our cultural identity as British Evangelical Christians, we might be more alert to the danger of exporting our cultural baggage to the mission fields on which we are working. Just as earlier generations of missionaries exported the values of civilisation, Christendom and modernity, this generation must avoid simply exporting its own cultural baggage (including our rampant individualism).

If we believe that post-Christendom insights lead us ultimately to a bright and perfect future, even end-point in the purposes of God, then it deserves the service of our lives. If, however, we welcome it as a renewing move of the Spirit for the way we ought to be doing things around here at this particular moment in history, then may avoid the danger of offering it as the only answer to the problem of the Church in Europe. We can avoid the situation where we're not always sure what the questions are, but convinced that the answer to all of them is probably 'Post-Christendom.'

So, part of the challenge when addressing Europe are its pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian identities. And what applies for Christian, equally applies to secularisation (pre, secular, and post-secular) as well as modernity (pre-modern, modern, post-modern). European countries and populations might better be understood as simultaneously demonstrating all of these impulses.

Reading the waves: taking up the missional challenges

1. Migration

It's currently estimated that 1.5 million migrant peoples arrives and settles in the EU each year. The same estimates also suggest that seven million migrant peoples within the EU have irregular status with a further half a million of these arriving each year. In total, 4% of the EU population, or 18.5 million people, is made up of non-EU citizens.

A January 2007 report in the EU Observer stated that migration from ex-communist EU states to the UK and Ireland showed no sign of slowing down, with Romanians and

Bulgarians testing their new EU travel freedoms. Ninety thousand Poles registered to work in Ireland in 2006 compared with 65,000 in 2005 according to the Irish national insurance office, with over 250,000 new workers settling in Ireland since 2004. Visiting Dublin last week I was impressed by the range of stores with Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Slovakian names, including the chain of Polish stores. Net migration to the UK hit 400,000 in 2005 - almost double the level in 2004 and 215,000 more than officially stated by the British government. 500,000 arrived in 2006 (though with 200,000 British citizens emigrating in the same year).

This is clearly a challenge for the political leaders of the European Union and the other European Institutions. It would be politically and economically naïve to simply open Europe's external borders to everybody who comes knocking. Equally, it is historically naïve to believe that Europe is essentially a Christian club (that can exclude Turkey solely on the grounds that its citizens are muslims) and that Europe's historical development has taken place without any reference to, dialogue with, or borrowing from, other non-European cultures.

It is a challenge for the Church and mission leaders of the UK and Europe. The window of opportunity might close. Evidence suggests that some migrants are returning to C&E Europe as wages rise in response to worker shortages. Polish individuals in Gloucester show no inclination to learn English – not really proof of the intention to stay here long term.

2. Islam

The indigenous European Islamic populations number approximately: Bulgaria (0.9 million), Bosnia (1.8 million), Albania (2.7 million), Macedonia (0.7 million), and Romania (45,000).

But statistics are tricky due to who counts as 'Muslim'. In asking whether this is a cultural or religious descriptor we reveal a further misunderstanding of the nature of Islam. Yet, despite this, there are many Muslims in Europe today who might be described as 'non-practising / secular / cultural muslims'. Of course there is always the danger of radicalisation but the presence of missionaries for Islamic radicalisation to work among the Muslim communities of Europe actually highlights the need.

Stories of Islamic Reform. Tariq Ramadan. Frej and his academic colleagues.

Stories of conversion to Christianity: Farsi speaking Iranians and others, OM in Bosnia HGV, Baptist Church in Georgia.

3. Neo-paganism (Incl. Buddhism?)

Estonian pyramid dwellers.

Jeff Fountain's attentiveness to Neo-Pagan spirituality.

John Drane (and the latest Sensing Faith).

Nick Spencer's research-led, Beyond the Fringe: Researching a Spiritual Age.

Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead's research-led, The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality

4. Ecological concerns

How is the Church to respond to the current ecological challenge? Is it enough for the Bishop of London to make a pledge to use public transport for a year?

Chris Wright, in positioning the next Lausanne Consultation for World Evangelisation, to be held in South Africa in 2010, argues for a theology of mission,

> "The God who commands us to disciple all nations also commands us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We still struggle to 'relate' these things to one another when we ought never to have split them apart in the first place. But sadly we did. We have been guilty of putting asunder what God has joined together. Lausanne, in its commitment to holistic mission, believes in the integration of all these things because anything less is untrue to the Bible."

It has to be said that the earlier biblical notion of 'Walking humbly' gives a certain poignancy to the notion of a, 'carbon footprint'.

A'Rocha has a European presence. The ecumenical Church groups of Europe are addressing the issue. Possibly the EEA is unable to do anything due to lack of resource (or, more likely, a lack of impetus from the national Alliances). Where is this on the agenda of mission agencies active in Europe? CMS & BMS have entered agreements/understandings with A'Rocha. That is welcome but what about others? Will Chris Wright's words come back to haunt agencies that turn up in Cape Town in three years' time with little to report on our mission to the whole of Creation?

5. Religious myopia/amnesia

Christianity in the public marketplace of Brussels, etc. Absence of historical accuracy in drafting of the (former) Constitutional Treaty and its replacement.

CEC's contribution to European values debate on interculturalism was invited on the basis that it would conform to the parameters of a secular framework.

Do we welcome the openness on the part of the European Commission, appearing in the new Treaty amendments, to engaging with Churches? Is it enough to leave this to Church leaders who lack a missional vision and might they merely perpetuate a Christendom mindset?

Learning to surf: Back to basics

Wilbert Shenk proposes a three-fold response: World – Word – Church

1. How do we understand and engage with the world?

Pluralistic. Multi-religious. Secular.

2. How do we read the Scriptures, particularly in public, with humility and confidence?

The Messiah is coming (Martin Kettle – Guardian)

> Most of the time, our music writers spend their time discussing what they see and hear in our concert halls and opera houses and listening to what emerges from the recording studio. There's nothing wrong with that, and no picture of our musical life would be complete without proper attention to these places. But the picture thus painted is not the full one. In fact, it is in some ways extremely misleading, because most of these music writers pay almost no attention to performances in the arenas in which arguably the majority of our

> national musical life takes place. I refer, of course, to our churches. This critical neglect is at its most brazen and indefensible in the month of December, as this is when the centrality of the church to modern British musical life impinges most obviously. A religious point could be made about this—but I am seeking to make only a musical one. (Prospect November 2007)

In the political arena (Tony Blair's comments).

> Tony Blair acknowledged that his belief in God played a "hugely important" role during his 10 years as prime minister, in a BBC television documentary "The Blair Years" broadcast on 25 November. "If I am honest about it, yes of course it was hugely important. You know you can't have a religious faith and it be an insignificant aspect because it's, it's profound about you and about you as a human being". I don't actually think there is anything wrong in having religious conviction - on the contrary I think it is a strength for people. If you are in the American political system or others then you can talk about religious faith and people say yes that's fair enough and it is something they respond to quite naturally. You talk about it in our system and frankly people do think you're a nutter."
>
> "This is a man who takes a Bible with him wherever he goes and last thing at night he will read from the Bible," Peter Mandelson told the BBC programme. Alastair Campbell warned Blair against going public on his beliefs. Both men feared the public would be wary. (Ecumenical News International 27th November 2007)

3. How do we re-imagine the Church?

Against the backdrop of numerical decline, scandal, abuses of power, and widespread indifference.

New and emerging or ancient and faithful? Davie concludes that there are two religious economies in Europe: religion as a marketplace and religion as a public utility. She astutely observes that each fills the space that the other leaves. These competing economies are in tension and it is in this tension that Europe's religious complexities will continue to emerge. (*The Bible in Transmission*, Winter 2007, p.15)

Postscript

John 1:6-9. Do we believe that the light of Christ still shines upon Europe, upon the UK? If so, then our task here as sojourners and exiles is not to reinvent light but to simply let the light of Christ shine through our witness as *martyrs* to the truth.

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Being Intentionally Missional in a Multi-Cultural Setting: a case study

Author: Peter Oyugi, Pastor in Elmfield Church, North London.

Background of Elmfield Church

Elmfield church used to be a Brethren church but due to the fact that numbers were beginning to drop they felt the need to employ a Pastor in 2000. Krish Kandiah was appointed and he helped turn around the church and bring in a large number of younger people. He was also able to initiate a 20s and 30s group that provided opportunity for Bible study and social gatherings for that age group. Part of the idea of appointing Krish was the fact that North Harrow is a very multi-cultural area and it was intended that this would help address the local needs of building a multi-cultural church. When Krish moved on in 2005, Elmfield appointed me, Peter Oyugi to take up the position of Pastor. This I believe was a very bold step as it involved bringing in someone from a completely different culture to lead the church. I come from Kenya and spent my previous eleven and a half years doing student work. This was mostly with the Kenyan IFES movement but also with UCCF in the UK for 3 years.

Elmfield today has a regular Sunday attendance of over 100 people and is actively involved in the local community. Notable amongst the ways in which it serves the local community is running an Art Competition in local schools. Each year we go into local schools and tell one of the parables of Jesus and invite the children to draw their impression of the parable. Those who submit entries are then invited to a Prize giving ceremony which this year was held in our church building but has previously been held elsewhere. During this ceremony we have the opportunity to tell the parable to the parents. After the prize giving we again go back into the schools to present certificates to all entrants. This is just one of the many ways we try and engage with the local community in creative ways. Just by doing the assemblies in the schools you begin to appreciate how multi-cultural the area is.

My observations of why these changes were necessary

1. Someone had a clear vision for change. There was both a lack of younger people as well as the need to engage with a multi-cultural neighbourhood.

2. The church had to undergo a paradigm shift in mission thinking. Things could not always be done the way they had been done before.

3. There was intentionality in all actions carried out by the church Leadership Team.

What does being intentionally multi-cultural entail?

In my estimation, I see the following aspects as being key:

1. Courage – The need to take a bold step. E.g., invite a Kenyan to pastor what is a pre-dominantly white church in a very multi-cultural area. The emphasis here isn't that it was a Kenyan chosen but that the commitment to a multi-cultural church is reflected by the leadership in word and practice.

Being intentional is perhaps the only legitimate way forward as there is otherwise no common ground or reason to meet.

2. Patience – Hard work because the Christian faith quickly creates a culture. The challenge remains how to integrate people from different cultures in a multi-cultural church. Slow progress, but worth it. Cultural boundaries are certainly not easy to cross as homogenous churches are perhaps a lot easier to promote, but the question is whether we want to remain true to what God's family should be – people gathered from every nation, tribe, people and language.

3. Listening – to the needs of people, and especially the minority is particularly important. There is nothing worse than the feeling of alienation.

Elmfield recently carried out a survey amongst its members. This was a risky step to take in a church context as you can never know what comes out of such surveys. However, it was amazing how constructive all the comments given were even though I have to admit some were coming from opposing ends of the spectrum meaning that it would be impossible to satisfy everyone's needs.

4. Context – Clear understanding of the sub-cultures, e.g., postmodernists; language groups; classes of people both in the church and the local community, in order to engage relevantly.

5. Focus - The Word, prayer and room for the Holy Spirit to work in the church must remain central to the church's life and service. We can only move by God's strength and help.

6. Team Work – it may be tempting to build the church around a strong individual; however, in a multi-cultural setting it is important to encourage leadership that has team work at its core since no one individual can effectively address the diversity of needs around.

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When Lightning Strikes
Responding to the challenge of fundamentalism

Author: David Porter, Director of the Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland.

Introduction

The essential issue is not our claim to the truth, or not our claim that God has revealed himself in Christ, it is the issue of how we relate that claim to power as we negotiate relationships with one another. Also, what is the context in which that negotiation takes place? When we look at fundamentalism we become aware of the massive challenges that confront our neighbours from within their own faith context. The fundamental challenge for us as Christians, if we want to be meaningful dialogue partners with them, is that we need a truth recovery process about our own dysfunction in this area.

I was very struck this summer, at the 50th anniversary of India/Pakistan independence, that the documentaries that were rolled out by the BBC had a different tone to them, a different articulation of the problems to do with partition and the killings. Some of the analysis I had never seen publicly acknowledged in the British press or in public discussion before, particularly the deliberate run down of the garrison, the systematic demobilisation and the deliberate policy of allowing the British administration to claim immunity by saying 'what could we do because there weren't enough of us; had we intervened we would have been overwhelmed and only made things worse.'

Evidently it has taken 50 years for us to reconstruct our memories. If that is true of human communities politically, it is also true of the church. We have to re-visit the narratives that we tell about how we got here, and in every telling we will, by the very nature of living in a fallen world, uncover more sin. Of course, it is also true that we can do so in the confidence that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, that in the Gospel God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and that in the mercy and grace of God there is freedom. This in turn gives us confidence to accept the invitation given to us by Paul to be involved in this ministry of reconciliation. As George Seagull, the Catholic theologian, points out, we are being invited to a Eucharistic path. Evangelicals are not very good at talking about a Eucharistic path and the need for liturgy as part of our mission, but we need to get over that. There is something profoundly Eucharistic in the truth that in the body of Christ, which was broken and shared for the salvation of the world, we too as the church become broken and shared. Even though this has been a reality for generations of those involved in mission, the challenge is that in re-narrating our memories there is a new level of being broken and shared out.

Re-narrating identity

For us British the issue is that Christ invites us to re-narrate our identity. And the biggest issue of identity that the British church needs to re-narrate is its relationship with the state. We have allowed, through our imperial history, a missiological imperative to become captive to historical contingencies, namely the state and how it is conducted. We have listened to the unfaithful voices that tell us that there is something intrinsic in our culture that makes it is more Christian than other cultures, rather than seeing that it is a gift of God which can be corrupted by these very voices. In our response to the fundamentalist threat, we need to work very hard and very sensitively to unpack this in a new way, a way that will bring new revelations about what went on in the past, and new acknowledgements by those who historically feel threatened.

Of course we all feel threatened, we feel we do not have the power, which is ironic considering most of us British belong to communities and groups that historically are the most powerful in the world and have been for generations. So we need to begin to re-narrate that. There is still much to be converted in our own midst and in our own negotiations with our historic fundamentalism, particularly in the area of the relationship between faith and politics, and our awareness of being both British and Christian. And if we do that, I think it will bring us into a more creative faith, perhaps sufficient even to equip us to be the voice of God. If we allow the gospel to challenge our identity we may then be able to challenge others.

Personally I believe that that is where an authentic biblical response to fundamentalism will begin. Someone has said that "Reconciliation occurs when my enemy tells me my story and I say 'yes that's my story'". And this leads to the thought that, "God is our greatest enemy". Is that not the gospel? God tells us the human story and we resist the gospel when we refuse to accept his narration of my story, of our story. We can be reconciled to God when we say, 'Yes, God, that is our story'. And the story that God tells us comes with this remarkable gift of grace and mercy. That is what makes it bearable to hear and accept. So if we are to tell our perceived enemy their story, we need to understand it. And if we are to be heard telling our story, we also need to listen to what our enemy has to say about our story. Hopefully, in that encounter, in that dialogue, we will open up new possibilities for the mercy and grace of God.

This is a profound, spiritual and theological and missional and political challenge to the church in Britain and it is one that we must engage with because the story is now no longer those who live over there, it is those who live right here, right next to us.

Fundamentalism

What about fundamentalism, as such? When we come to this topic we need the gift to see ourselves as others see us, or as Jesus would say 'look at the beam in your own eye', because in the context of our modern society, we British are the original fundamentalists; it began with us.

Truth

Fundamentalism is essentially about truth. In this it betrays its origin in the Christian church. The 'fundamentals' were promulgated by a series of pamphlets published between 1909 and 1920 by Presbyterians taking part in the debate at Princeton University in North America about theological liberalism. They were asking the question: What are the fundamentals of the faith that we must hold on to, what is the truth that we must defend? The term 'fundamentalist' itself began in the early 1920's to take on the connotation of those who held to a set of strong beliefs, or a strong set of beliefs, that were not open to alteration. So this whole debate about what it meant to be fundamentalist actually went to the heart of the missiological discussion of what it meant to be a biblically faithful church in the culture and intellectual context of the twentieth century. And, in many ways, Islamic fundamentalism is facing a similar problem. It is about what it means to be authentically Muslim, faithful to the faith in the context, culturally and intellectually, of the beginning of the twenty-first century. How do you hold on to a set of beliefs and truths at the heart of an ancient faith in a modern world in which those beliefs seem to be assailed from every side?

Separatism

But the second issue that came to distinguish fundamentalism is that it became less concerned with truth and more about separatism, less concerned with the positive affirmation and holding on to truth, and more about how truth could be used, not so much to divide because there is a sense in which the truth of the Gospel always does divide, but to hold

other people apart and to hold ourselves apart from others. It then took on connotations of divisiveness, of intolerance, of anti-intellectualism, because it was about separating ourselves in our relationships, in our debates, in our human engagement, from all that would corrupt. And we could say that within the Christian tradition what was a legitimate concern for truth, because of an emphasis on separatism, became a dysfunction which produced some of the conflicts that Christian fundamentalism began to have in the wider society.

Protecting God?

That leads to the third point which is that fundamentalism moves from a concern with truth to a concern with being separate. It moves to a more pro-active concern with protecting the truth and the temptation to protect God. Of course, our need to protect God is a biblical absurdity and our 'defence' rapidly becomes an immersion in conflict, one in which we are quite prepared to use ungodly rules and unbiblical means.

Revelation

The fourth point is that as we separate from the world, and become antagonistic towards it, we begin to have distorted understandings of the revelation in which the truth is based in the first place. It becomes God revealing himself to us rather than revealing himself to the world. Instead of the truth of God possessing us, we possess it. Revelation loses its mystery and its magnificence and becomes the tool by which we then seek to bang others over the head. And, of course, this also represents a good deal of the history of evangelicals within the Christian church. In trying to distinguish themselves from the fundamentalists, evangelicals too began to use their claim to revelation in a corrupt way. Indeed they have spent most of the twentieth century chastising themselves and other Christians – who is orthodox, who is not, who is part of the family? – leading to the downward spiral of secondary separation whereby you cannot talk to me, not because I do not believe what you believe, but because I talk to those who do not believe what you believe. So, in a very real way, the most complete cycle of the manifestation of fundamentalism we have in our contemporary context is Christian. We can therefore learn best by looking at ourselves in order to explore the challenges and the processes that are happening for other people as they struggle to work out what it means to be faithful to truth in the context of the threats posed by modernity.

Politics

The last two points probably go to the heart of what I think the real challenge to us is from fundamentalism, not just Christian but Islamic fundamentalism and also the political fundamentalism of the neo-conservatives. It is striking that the root of political Islamist fundamentalism and American neo-conservatism go back to a similar period in a particular place in North America and that is Chicago in the late 50's and early 60's. From the neo-con perspective we have Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago and his department of Political Philosophy. His complete disillusionment with the American experiment, in his view corrupted by capitalism and by heathenism, made him want to re-define it and create a new moral context in terms of democracy and freedom. At much the same time there was Sayyid Qutb from Egypt, who went back to Egypt having studied in the States grasping a vision of the underbelly of what was seen as the best of the West, and understanding its moral corruption. In reaction to that, he imbedded himself in a political fundamentalist response and began to articulate his vision to the Muslim Brotherhood, leading to the beginnings of the rise of Islamism.

Coercion

So my fifth word to attach to the whole concept of fundamentalism is 'coercion'. It is about how we use power and politics to impose our system and our belief on others. And there is a warning there for us in the church because that is the reality that we do not like to face. Americans do not like using the word 'empire', but the United States is probably the first evangelical empire that has ever existed. The fundamental religious impulse of North America is evangelical. We have a President who reads his Bible and prays every day and has had a conversion experience of the grace of God in his life. And it still does not mean he does politics any better than any Catholic emperor of the past, or any European liberal Protestant leader of the past. The dynamic of power is still handled wrongly. Even within the British church we would like somehow get our hands on power, and we need to remember that we would not be any better at handling power than anyone else. Politics, in my simple definition, is the art of negotiating a relationship, and people, including Christians, are involved in politics all the time, negotiating relationships within families, churches, and work places. The church is negotiating relationships with the world around it. And there are two things that corrupt that negotiation of relationships, which make them dysfunctional and conflictual and that is the issue of identity anxiety and the issue of the misuse of power. The first happens when our sense of who we are is dependent on the other being conformed to our likeness. It is the opposite of being secure in who we are, so that encounter becomes the place of discovery and of celebration of the diversity that God has built into our world. When our identity confidence goes wrong, we want to exclude the other, to say that they do not belong. The second, as we have seen, is the issue of power, or how we control the relationship. This could be economically, through control of land or the market, or legally through control of the law, or in many other ways. In our experience of relationships how do we negotiate with others who have a different sense of identity and belonging to us? Do we use the power that is ours to impose who we are on them, or do we genuinely negotiate that relationship? That is the question that faces the church in relation to Islam, Hinduism and other faiths in our midst, as well as those who are of no faith but who make different moral choices to us. Do we negotiate the civic space in a way that acknowledges their right as human beings to be in that space with us, accepting that we cannot coerce them, that we are not going to win them to Christ by coercion.

Exclusion

And the last word I would use to do with fundamentalism is 'exclusion'. This is when we say to other people that they do not belong, because they do not believe the same as we do, they do not behave as we do, and they do not make the same moral choices as we do, therefore they have no place in this space. We cannot as church and as Christians and as missions live in a world without others. We must exercise a certain amount of inclusion of everybody, and in that time-honoured Christian phrase 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. This is at the heart of how we negotiate our relationships in the public square. We are as much tempted to a fundamentalist response as others we now perceive as a threat in our midst. If we want to understand Islamic fundamentalism and secular fundamentalism and any other sort of fundamentalism, the place to start is understanding our own hearts. We are subject to those impulses and temptations as well, because that is actually the history of the church.

Shouting Above the Storm
Speaking out about injustice

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Prelude (JI)

I am going to begin with a rant and if there any of my few remaining friends or members of my family in the audience, I give them permission to leave now. The trouble with the title 'speaking out against injustice' is that we – you and I – are part of the problem rather than the solution.

Many years ago I heard Professor Bruce asked the question: which group that we encounter in the gospels do evangelicals most resemble? He answered unhesitatingly 'the Pharisees'. I was quite shocked. But the more I have thought about it since, the truer this seemed. Are we like John the Baptist and the Essenes? – no deserts for us: there's not a trace of asceticism among us evangelicals and we're proud of it. The Zealots then? Heavens no! Revolutionary politics is the last thing that we're into. Are we the poor to whom the good news is preached? I don't think so. Just wander round the car park and you'll see what I mean. I know: it's the disciples. Well, possibly, but on the whole evangelicals are much more interested in salvation than discipleship; we leave that to the Mennonites and the Anabaptists.

I reckon it's the Pharisees – good, earnest, respectable folk, familiar with the Scriptures, elect (i.e. not like other people), concerned about all sorts of 'purity codes', particularly purity of doctrine. We could press this a little further. The Pharisees are the evangelicals, the Sadducees are the liberals – a bit too reductionist and rationalistic for their own good, but, if truth be told, coming from the same stable as we do, and the Scribes are the college lecturers. Always telling people what they should do, but seldom doing it themselves.

Where is all this leading to? Have you noticed that fundamentally what Jesus had against the religious leaders of his day was not that they were religious but that they used their religion as a cloak for injustice. 'Woe to you Pharisees. For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds and neglect justice and the love of God' (Luke 11:42). 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in church and places of honour at conferences. They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers' (Luke 20:46,7).

The trouble is that God requires justice first and religion a long way second. Religious people like the Pharisees did not like to be reminded of this and their spiritual children are no different. John Lilburne the seventeenth century Puritan radical attacked the religious establishment of his day in these words: 'And if any gilded or varnished Scribe or Pharisee...find themselves aggrieved, I desire to let them know that *fiat justitia ruat coelum* (let justice be done though the heavens fall) is my motto, and if I perish, it shall be in the following of justice for justice' sake.' And so to our subject.

Justice and mission in the Bible

I believe that the Biblical idea of justice provides us with a key to mission, especially in stormy times. Waldon Scott's book *Bring Forth Justice*, which attempts in effect a Biblical basis of mission, picks up on this idea. Scott is of course referring to the first Servant Song (in Isaiah 42) where the Servant's task is to 'bring forth justice' and I am sure that you are well aware that Matthew applies this passage directly to Jesus (Matthew 12:18-21) with particular reference to his ministry on Galilee. We sometimes fail to recognise the importance

of the idea because the key words in the Biblical languages have a wider meaning than our English word 'justice' and are translated into a number of different words in our English versions ('judgement' commonly in the AV). The force of the concept in both OT and NT is that justice is always *interventionary*. It is not an abstract concept, and a judge is not only someone who offers an impartial verdict having heard the evidence, but one who intervenes on behalf of the oppressed, those who are already being unfairly treated or who are helpless in the face of powers that are too strong for them. Yahweh is the judge of the Israelites as well as the Egyptians at the Exodus (Exodus 6:6). He is not one who waits for the outcome in order, as I say, to give an impartial verdict. He comes down and gets involved 'rolls up his sleeves and gets his hands dirty'. The judges are called 'judges' precisely because Yahweh appoints them to rescue Israel from their oppressors. In Isaiah God puts his Spirit upon his Servant so that he may bring justice to the nations. In a universal extension this means salvation for the nations and mercy to the oppressed. God himself sends forth his justice as a light for the peoples (51:4) that will mean deliverance and salvation for them (51:5). Jesus' role is to minister to 'the bruised reed' and 'the smouldering wick' and, in restoring them, 'lead justice to victory' (Matthew 12:20). In the humiliation of the cross Jesus' justice is taken away so that he might restore it to those who did not have it (Acts 8:33 quoting Isaiah 53:8). Seen in this way justice is 'the good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18), it is God's deliverance. Not in any abstract sense, but because Jesus is proclaiming Jubilee Year, 'the year of the Lord's acceptance', when what Ched Myers calls 'Sabbath Economics' will be put into effect.

Doing justice is how we know God

'The Lord has made himself known, he has executed justice...for the needy shall not always be forgotten (Psalm 9:16,18). Understanding the character of God as deliverer of the oppressed is to know who God really is. We really get to know God, not so much in the place of quiet and retreat but when we participate with him in the work of deliverance in 'bringing forth justice'. There is an instructive oracle that Jeremiah delivers to King Jehoiakim. The King had been building a palace for himself by forced labour and Jeremiah scathingly contrasts his behaviour with that of his father 'good king Josiah'. Notice the punch line. (Jeremiah 22:13-16).

I remember going to a conference on 'knowing God'. One talk was on 'knowing God in Scripture', another on 'knowing God in the quiet place'. Somebody, a missionary from India, told us a story about being in Delhi bus station. There was a woman in obvious physical distress, her sari covering her face, writhing and groaning, in the grip of some fearsome, perhaps contagious, illness, and on the whole people were avoiding her – too embarrassed or fearful, or perhaps just not wanting to be involved. We might say that helping that woman, giving her a drink, getting her to a safe place, finding some medical care, was what the Bible calls 'bringing forth justice'. But for our missionary friend it was, she recalled, supremely a time for 'knowing God'. God was there in a way that she had never experienced before.

I think that leads us to a number of assertions that connect directly with the theme of this conference. 'In the eye of the storm' is where we meet God. Shouting above the storm – speaking out about injustice, standing up for the poor, taking a stand on justice issues – is preaching the gospel. It is our mission because it is Jesus' mission, which is God's mission, *missio dei*.

Doing justice is context specific

What we also have to say is that God's mission seen from our perspective is context specific. It is time bound, part of history, part of *our* history. We 'know God' by discovering what is our part in the divine drama, and playing it. Jesus blamed the Jewish leaders in his day for not 'interpreting the present time'. (See Luke 12:54-6, also Matthew 16:1-4 and Luke 19:41-4.) They did not perceive that the nation was heading for disaster and it was their responsibility

to steer it away from it. N.T. Wright puts it this way: 'This was the challenge that Jesus gave to his contemporaries: give up the tradition that has so gripped you, which is driving you toward the cliff-edge of ruin.' Their lack of perception was spiritual blindness, hypocrisy, and hardness of heart and Jesus wept about this situation (Luke19:41). This was not a matter ultimately of discernment. They knew what to do but did not want to obey; because it might mean a loss of privilege and power.

But that was *their* context and *their* task. Others have to serve their generation, to be weather forecasters of the storm that is blowing in on them.

- For Abraham it was leaving Ur and the adventure of faith
- For the prophets it was the issue of religion and righteousness
- For Haggai and Zechariah it was the rebuilding of the temple
- For Paul it was the mission to the Gentiles
- For Luther it was preaching justification by faith
- For Carey it was 'attempting great things for God' in India
- For Christians in Nazi Europe it was the question of their Jewish neighbour
- For white South African Christians it was apartheid
- For Christians today it may be…

Each day, as we have seen, has its issue. Not yesterday's issues or my neighbour's task. No use going to Israel or Palestine and not talking politics or to South America and not being concerned about poverty. For each one of us this is *the eye of the needle, the narrow road*. To turn aside from this task is the double-mindedness of which James speaks, it is the lame excuse of the man who hid his talent, it is the worship of the beast.

I have been reading and thinking recently about the history of the Jewish tragedy in Nazi Europe – books about the fate of the Jews in Vienna after the Anschluss; about Louis Darquier who was responsible for the internment and transportation of Jews from France to the concentration camps; about the Italian Primo Levi who survived Auschwitz, and so on. Here in Europe our response to Fascism (at least up to 1945) was 'the eye of the needle'. [clip from 'Au Revoir Les Enfants']. It pointed up, in a dramatic way, that there were choices to be made to do with fundamental justice issues. But perhaps we can stay at that particular moment in history too long. We Brits, at least, feel rather pleased with ourselves about the Nazi episode and the Second World War. After all, we like to think we were partners in a great coalition that overthrew tyranny and delivered freedom. But what about this? [clip from 'Amazing Grace']

[Discuss in groups: What is 'our context and therefore our 'big issue'?]

Trends (CR)

1. The growing gap between the rich and poor

If the World were a village…

Its population of 1,000 would be made up of:

60 North Americans

80 South Americans

86 Africans

210 Europeans

564 Asians

700 would be coloured

300 would be white

There would be 300 Christians

60 would own half the total wealth

500 would not have enough to eat

600 would live in the slums

700 would be illiterate

Since 1980 around 15 countries have enjoyed remarkable economic growth and their 1.5 billion citizens have seen their situation improve. During this time more that 100 countries have experienced economic declines and their nearly 2 billion citizens, almost half of whom are children and youth, have suffered through recessions, currency devaluations, and crushing international debt.

The world's poor often live in an unofficial shadow economy – estimated at $US9 million – street vendors, day workers, unregistered businesses, illegal immigrants. This shadow economy is perhaps the rawest expression of capitalism existing on barter, bribes and illegal activities – barter, bribes, drugs, child labour sex trade, illegal arms trade – much of this is often unchallenged in this shadow economy.

2. The invisible poor and lost

What do I mean by this? Who are they and where are they? Certain statistics will tell us that about ¼ of the world's population have never heard the name of Jesus. Some will say they are hidden away in countries that perhaps seem impenetrable, distant, difficult to access. This may be so – all know of terrible human rights abuses that are hidden. The invisible poor and lost may also be our neighbours – literally – for example, the kidnapped girl in Austria.

3. Increasing internal violence and conflict

In 2000, 38 major conflicts and wars occurred around the world. Over 540m children estimated to live in unstable or violent contexts. More than 2m children died as a result of armed conflict in the 1990s and more than 6m were seriously injured or permanently disabled. Local warlords export natural resources to pay for their armies while turning more than 300,000 children into soldiers (LRA) creating unbelievable trauma and huge numbers of internally displaced people.

4. People movements

The number of refugees has dramatically increased from 2.5m in 1975 to 15m in 2001. And then there are 22m internally displaced people due to civil war and economic collapse. The majority of these are women and children.

5. Towards 3 centres of economic power and the growing power of Asia

Asia, EU and USA will form the 3 centres of global economic power. China and India will also become major players on the world economic stage. What will this mean for the hegemony of the $US, World Bank and IMF?

6. The marginalization of Africa

The West is becoming disheartened with Africa – "the hopeless Continent" with its seemingly intractable problems of uneven political leadership, wars, declining agricultural production, increasing population and of course HIV/AIDS. The disease is the continent's biggest killer with approx 3m newly infected each year.

7. Polarization of power and shifting patterns of governance

Maybe what John Pilger calls "the new rulers of the world" (the multinationals). Global institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the UN even and trans-national corporations may have more power or have more effect on people's lives, especially the poor than their own governments. Ethnicity and religion can be manipulated to create local power. The poor are generally powerless in the face of all this.

8. The changing shape of the Christian church

Scholars such as Kwame Bediako and Andrew Walls have alerted us to the great phenomenon of the 20th century – that the centre of gravity of the church has shifted – south. More than 50% of Christians and 70% of evangelicals live in the Majority world. The church is more southern, aware of the supernatural and conservative theologically. It is also more holistic. Philip Jenkins says, "Soon, the phrase, 'a white Christian' may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as 'a Swedish Buddhist.' Such people can exist, but a slight eccentricity is implied." [1] Latin America has the largest number of Christians, Africa has the fastest growing church. In Europe the church is fast declining. However, this good news of amazing church growth in the last century is accompanied by profound contradictions. It has not been accompanied by widespread changes in social, economic and political behaviour reflecting the values of the reign of God. In fact we probably see more violence, poverty, injustice, materialism, immoral and unethical behaviour than ever. The crucial question for the church everywhere is, what kind of Christians are we making?

9. The emerging power and place of women

We know that women are linked to the good that social change produces. Female literacy correlates highly with reduced child mortality, lower fertility rates, improved nutrition, better children's education and successful micro-enterprise. Among the poor, women do most of the work, produce the food and raise the children. However, there is an interesting irony when it comes to the girl child who still receives less education, less food and less health care than boys. In our world women are the poorest and the most oppressed by any indicators; in terms of health, education, economics, abuse and violence - whether by individuals or by social structures. In every country of the world men earn more pay for less work. It is estimated that women do 62% of the world's work hours, yet own only 1% of the world's property. Women form 75 % of all sick people, 70% of all the poor, 66% of all illiterates and 80% of all refugees. Girls are still subject to harmful practices so if women are the key to transformation what are the implications of this?

10. The public health divide

The divide between rich and poor in terms of public health is stark. Infectious diseases kill more people every year than natural disasters. Since 1945 it is estimated that 150m people died from AIDS-related illnesses, TB and malaria in contrast to the 23m who died from wars over the same period. We know the catastrophic social impact that AIDS is having on countries within Africa especially. Market forces determine the manufacture of drugs – many

pharmaceutical companies have limited their research into tropical diseases because of the high costs and low financial return.

11. Environmental limits

We are facing 3 parallel trends: falling water tables, shrinking cropland and levelling off of fish production from the oceans. Population growth is highest in the areas least able to meet the demand for food. Poverty leads to environmental degradation which in turn creates more poverty and can lead to increasing numbers of environmental refuges – estimated at 25m. Consumption patterns in the North make a far higher per capita impact on the environment than that of the rest of the world. A child born the industrialised world adds more to consumption and pollution over their lifetime that 30-50 children born in the Majority world. Of course, we are all very aware now of the awful implications of climate change and global warming. But how do we change our lifestyles to make a discernable difference?

12. Interfaith Issues

How do we relate to our neighbours from another faith – or no faith?? In a climate of fear, mistrust, inconvenience and pain (increased number of anti-Semitic attacks and violence against Muslims) – how do we respond as Christians?

13. Conclusion

So mission in the 21st century looks very different from preceding centuries. You can see from some of these trends that the world has changed dramatically. Perhaps the most significant change, as far as the church is concerned, is the shift in the centre of gravity of the Christian church towards the Global South. We are now living in a church which is predominantly female, poor and living in the Global South. This has huge ramifications for us in the Global North as to how we engage in mission e.g. whom do we send, where, how. It also means that we need to look at ourselves differently – we need to receive in mission and have the humility to listen and learn from the Global South. We, in the Anglican church, have also seen how the Anglican church in the Global South has different opinions and beliefs on certain issues that affect our Communion and our life together.

Another significant change which impacts UK has been migration and immigration and the kind of multi-cultural society we have now. What does this mean for the mission of the church here in UK? We may find that many of the migrants to UK are more 'spiritual' than the locals while at the same time many of our traditional churches are leaking members at a rapid rate. Finally, globalisation, improved communications and cheaper travel means that we are familiar with all these trends in a new way. We hear of the latest disasters immediately, when we travel we see differing standards of living and are often confronted with poverty and injustice literally in our faces, we experience the planet heating up so what does this mean for our daily discipleship as we follow Christ in this rapidly changing world? Perhaps this ease of communication does give us the opportunity of relating in new ways but perhaps also, the overwhelming nature of the problems of our planet cause us to retreat into our own corners, desperate for some respite. My hope is that we will continue to proclaim the good news, live with integrity as disciples of Jesus Christ, commit ourselves to show love and compassion, be involved in the struggle for a just society and care for our creation – all as we continue to engage with our 'big issue.'

One version of the Big Issue (JI)

I have struggled to find a single word to sum up the situation we are facing. In the end I settled for 'colonialism'; perhaps 'imperialism' might do. We think the age of colonialism is

over, though the word 'empire' hasn't gone out of fashion. George W. Bush and I both use it frequently! When I use the term 'colonialism' in my teaching I notice that the eyes of my students from the Global South light up. They know what I mean. The point about colonialism is that it creates a geography and ideology of centre and periphery that very much shape our world today. Let me illustrate. My daughter works with a mission outfit called 'Servants to Asia's Urban Poor'. What a great name! Except that we might substitute 'the World' for 'Asia, it seems to me just about right. Jesus said that he was 'among us as one that serves' (Luke 22:27). It is Jesus the Servant who 'brings forth justice'. Servants are the exact opposite of colonialists or imperialists. They are not at all the ones with the wealth, power and influence. 'Urban' is good because it is our actual context. Most of us live and work in cities. (More about that in a moment.) And then it is the poor to whom the good news is preached. What better place to start?

Let us look at *urban* mission. It is not, of course, that the countryside is all right. In fact one of the reasons why people are flocking into cities is to escape the crisis of the countryside. But I do believe that just at the moment cities deserve our special attention. They are, sociologically speaking, today's 'perfect storm'. 'One billion people – or one in three urban residents – now live in an urban slum, the vast majority of them in developing nations', writes Mark Kramer, in his recent book simply called *Dispossessed, Life in our World's Urban Slums*. He adds, 'At current rates, within a decade of this writing we'll have more than twenty cities in the world with more than ten million inhabitants, most of them in poor nations. By the 2030s, the number of people living in informal settlements could double to about two billion, and we've yet to find some programmatic panacea for urban blight.' Mike Davis, in his even more depressing book, *Planet of Slums* reckons that by 2015 there will be at least 550 cities with a population of more than a million. City population will be something like 10 billion by 2050. Most of these people will be living in slums and most of them will be in developing countries. [Clip of Kibera from 'The Constant Gardner']

The uncomfortable truth is that the modern megacity (and there are more and more of them, as we have seen) is what it is because it is a *colonial* space in nearly every aspect of its relationships. Historically, of course, many of the world's great cities such as Kolkata and Mumbai in India or Shanghai and Hong Kong in China, or Nairobi in Kenya, were the direct product of colonialism. But it is more serious than that. Any Empire essentially operates as a metropolitan centre with a subservient, contributing periphery (colonies). So does the megacity. It has a metropolitan centre where power and wealth reside and a 'colonial' periphery which can be either the rural vicinity or its own slums or both. Actually, it has a third 'periphery', a pool of immigrant labour, people who come to work in the city on 'colonial' terms and who have been 'produced' by neo-colonialism and its unfair economic and trading arrangements. **[Karibu Mukholis]**

If you take the two principles that we have been working with – firstly that justice means intervention on behalf of the 'losers' and secondly that the critical determinant of specific action is the context – then you have a working model for mission. I would only add that we need to look at this on a variety of scales. Justice in the story of the Good Samaritan was precisely to do with responding to the need of the man lying by the roadside. He required 'intervention' and the Jericho Road was the context – it set the agenda as they say. A modern example would be my missionary in the Delhi bus station. But at another level structural injustice requires structural intervention. There are 'yokes of bondage' which need smashing. It could be King Jehoiakim using forced labour as in Jeremiah 22 or it could be the generals in Myanmar who are currently using similar methods to build their country villas and golf courses. At a mega scale, Jesus attacked the purity code and the debt system of the Jewish Temple state which kept the rich rich and the poor poor; today it might be the unfair trading system which currently obtains between the West and the Global South and which has the same effect. Or, to put it slightly differently, one issue – street children for example – may have a number of levels. The child on the street whom I encounter every day on my way

to the post office is one challenge. The police action against street children which may go so far as a 'shoot on sight' policy, would demand urgent action of another sort. An investigation as to *why* there are so many children on the streets would be a further, wider issue. All of these are *justice* issues in the Biblical sense. My own particular circumstances, my context, would determine which issue or issues I addressed.

Our response (CR)

What we need is the gift of sight. The gift of sight is a gift of the HS. Our eyes have to be opened to recognise JC, just as it was for those first disciples – over the dinner table, in the garden, on the lake, on the Damascus Rd. Once we can see JC, the HS enables us to see the other person. This is truly a gift of the HS. Unless we can see "the other" we will never be able to be authentically engaged in mission.

If we had been able to "see the other" might the genocide in Rwanda never have happened? If we were able "to see the other" might the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the civil war in N Ireland, the ignorance and apathy concerning Sudan and Congo, *apartheid* in South Africa, violence and oppression in Burma and Zimbabwe, tribalism, caste and class systems, oppressive colonialism – might all this have been avoided – if only we could see? Who are we blind to in our contexts, which prevents us from seeing the other person and, wittingly or unwittingly, means that we practise a theology of exclusion rather than of embrace? Might it be the older women in our congregations, who always faithfully provide the food, clean the church, arrange the flowers – have we ever taken the time to "see" them and to thank them? Might it be the young people whose music is so loud, whose language is incomprehensible, whose body-piercing and head shaving is so alien – have we ever stopped to look them in the eye, to appreciate their music, to consider the pressures they may be under – the bleak prospect of unemployment, broken homes, student loans, an uncertain future – have we ever stopped to look them in the eye and tried to understand them in their context? Might it be those theologically different from us whom we would criticize behind their backs rather than invite them into our homes to listen to them and "see" their point of view? Might it be those migrants who never learn our language, who never even try to integrate, who take over whole streets and suburbs in our cities – have we ever had them in our homes, offered them hospitality and tried to "see" their culture? In humility, let us ask ourselves whom the HS might be calling us "to see."

And now let us turn to our neighbour to pray. Let us pray for two things – firstly that we may have the courage to face the 'big issue' in our context and secondly to ask God whom we need to "see" in our contexts.

In many instances, migration is a postcolonial phenomenon, which continues to link the colonising and colonised nations. The presence in Europe, for example, of people whose not-too-distant origins were in Africa or Asia or Latin America reflects the bonds (in more than one sense) created by the Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch and British empires. Difficult postcolonial issues such as multiculturalism (ethnic differences), language barriers, uneven development, inter-generational strife, identity crises and the like stem from this movement of peoples. In the same way Europe has become the testing ground for a number of new missiological issues such as monoethnic churches in a multiethnic society and witness to the gospel in a post Christian society (often by Christians who have no experience of a post Christian society!).

As a result, today we see societies which are 'mixed-up' in ways that are quite unique. Migration itself is not a recent phenomenon, of course. It has been going on for centuries. The United States, Australia, and Canada – just to make a selection – have experienced huge waves of immigration for two hundred years or more, indeed are nations largely made up of immigrants. But their initial approach, speaking generally, was to handle the situation by promoting a sense of new-found oneness among their people. They were greatly aided in

this by the way that immigrants were able to forge a new life for themselves without the presence of a settled population. (Sometimes the land was genuinely unoccupied, sometimes the original inhabitants were eliminated.) Immigrants today, however, encounter centuries' old civilisations and even more importantly, they remain the minority. On the whole, too, they form a diaspora, that is to say that retain strong links with their place of origin. (See below.) Another difference might be the relative isolation of past generations of immigrants. The original settlers of countries like the US and Australia had little opportunity to return to their homeland, even if they had wanted to. Partly this had to do with the fact that they were often escaping from the old to the new, and partly because transport systems were comparatively slower and more expensive – return to the homeland and regular visits were not easy to manage for people who had 'sold up' to make the move in the first place. I suspect that the vast majority of immigrants nowadays can afford the (relatively cheap) air fares to visit friends and relatives at home. People are 'on the move' more than ever before today and in all directions.

Globalisation – people on the move

Postcolonialism links with globalisation. The global culture demands and then favours those who are prepared to be mobile or at least to plug into the communications revolution at some level. By one description most people in the affluent world are economic migrants. Very few people stay at home when it comes to finding a job. The difference is that globalisation has made it both easier and (often) more necessary to make that move. Not equally easy, however. Unequal development within globalisation means job mobility and open frontiers for some, but forced migration and hostile frontiers for others. (Postcolonial migrants, for example, are more often in this second category.) 'Economic migrants' is a loaded term, nowadays, because they come in a number of varieties. They may be people who simply want to earn a better living, and have marketable skills for which they can get a better price away from home. Then there are those who need to make new arrangements for their families as a matter of survival. They simply cannot provide for their own by staying at home. Globalisation in its revolutionary communications mode has made these movements possible where they have not always been an option before. Also, sometimes global economics are the cause of this process. The way in which multi-nationals can now choose where their manufacturing and service base is, means that for many people the work which was traditionally associated with their locality has gone elsewhere and they simply have to travel away from home in order to move to a new job. (All this does not take into account the refugees from war and from religious and political persecution.)

Diaspora

The name 'diaspora' may have behind it the simple idea of dispersion, but it has now become something of a technical term, with a number of features. First of all, it involves a dispersion from one place or 'centre' from which all the dispersed take their identity, though there can be a variety of foreign destinations. All share in a common memory or myth of this 'homeland' (even if they are born somewhere else!), something which is so important that there is no likelihood that it will be forgotten. The fact that they remain 'strangers', a perpetual minority in their host nation, keeps the myth alive. If, by chance they are assimilated to such an extent that they disown or forget their place of origin, to that extent they are ceasing to be part of the diaspora. Many hope to return to their homeland, and even if this is not the long term plan they are often keen to visit from time to time if they are able to do so. They are also often very willing to take part in enterprises that benefit their homeland, whether this is to their individual advantage or not. All this means that the ongoing connections with their homeland are an important aspect of their self-identity.

Typically, diaspora communities are both needy and open. Many diaspora communities give the impression that they are doing very well! People who leave their own countries to work somewhere else (if it is voluntary) are often the most go-ahead and successful. Think of the way that members of the Indian diaspora have prospered in areas such as business and information technology. But the reverse is also true. Immigrant communities often fall behind in terms of education, securing jobs and business success. Natural disadvantages to do with language and culture (I mean that they are different from those of the majority) hold them back. So do the prejudices of the host nation. Some are lonely and isolated. They need help to cope with a challenging new situation. The openness of diaspora communities is also an ambiguous concept. Often the sense that they are being discriminated against, the feeling that they are in a foreign land, the all-prevailing newness of their situation leads to a very understandable 'closed' or defensive mentality. There is evidence, for example, that diaspora communities are more likely to emphasise their religious commitments – if they are different from those of the host population – than they did back at home. Being religious is now part of their identity that they need to emphasise if that identity is going to survive. (In this respect Christians who are concerned about the growing militancy of Muslims in the West should remember Aesop's fable about the wind and the sun. The contest was about who could get a man to remove his cloak. The more the wind blew the more the man clutched his cloak around him. However, when the sun shone he took it off!) On the other hand people do 'open up' when they are in new circumstances. They try new things. The fact that they are not being observed by what was likely a close knit community at home frees them up to do this. When moving to a new place they expect it to be different and expect to have to adapt to it. Some of the new arrangements suit them better than the old ones.

Mission

There are a number of missiological conclusions that we need to come to here. It is fair to assume that needy people are the church's opportunity, and that it is neither exploitive nor patronising to offer people friendship and help in these circumstances. Moving into a new culture, far away from familiar friends and family, can be a difficult process, and leaving people just to 'get on with it' is certainly not an appropriate response. Diaspora communities can live with a constant sense of being under threat, and Christians in their dealings with threatened minorities have a responsibility to do everything they can to alleviate that sense of threat, whatever its source. On the other hand diaspora people are usually hoping for something new. They have not come such a long distance only to remain the same people that they were before. In a very profound way the gospel offers people a new start, and maybe that is the newness they have been looking for all their lives.

Among Christians in particular it is unacceptable that people arriving as guests should end up in exclusive ethnic groups – even if this is in the name of dynamic evangelistic methods! I am not in favour of homogenous churches, for example. The cutting edge of evangelism in any church may have to have a cultural element in it – young people evangelising young people, employing someone from an ethnic minority group as an evangelist to reach his or her fellows and so on – but one of the essential witnesses of the gospel is still that we are all 'one in Christ Jesus' and that as far as 'the world' is concerned we are all aliens and there is every reason for us to stick together.

Diaspora people are often keen to do something for their home country. This can have missiological significance, too. The organisation South Asian Concern is a good example here. Its 'concern' is primarily for the Asian diaspora in the UK, but Asian diaspora Christians are also warmly encouraged to take responsibility for the South Asian sub-continent and its need of the gospel. Notice that it is in a good position to do so. Because a diaspora never loses contact with 'home', because of the network effect, there is constant traffic between those at home and those in exile, so to speak. The gospel can be part of that traffic. This is one of the great joys of the postcolonial situation. Postcolonialism reminds us that we are

living in a world that has been profoundly shaped by the colonial experience. There are so many bad outcomes of that, it becomes a dispiriting task to catalogue them. Yet the continued connection between, say, Britain and India seems, from the point of view of the gospel, an example of redemption. Not that it excuses the history of British imperialism, but it takes something which had much that was evil and exploitive and uses it for blessing – a process at which, if the irreverence may be pardoned, God is very good.

Footnotes

[1] P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p.3.

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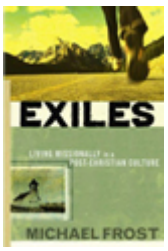
Conference Book Highlights

Compiled by Tim Davy, Reviews Editor for Encounters.

So what books were being highlighted at this year's conference? Here is a selection…



Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture

by Michael Frost (Hendrickson, 2006, £11.99).

Frost writes from an obvious desire to see the people of God become what they are called out of the mainstream to be - exiles. His clear vision and theological perception commends this book to all those who cynically dismiss missional church as overly pragmatic and descriptive and too little concerned with theological reflection. This book is a welcome addition to the increasing volume of literature that addresses these deficiencies. (Darrell Jackson)

ISBN: 9781565636705

Purchase from St Andrew's Bookshop

Grace for Muslims? The Journey from Fear to Faith

by Steve Bell (Authentic Media, 2006, £8.99).

Steve Bell tells the story of his own physical journey from his conversion, through university to a teaching post in Nottingham. From the UK he went to Egypt for 10 years until the authorities there invited him to leave. Steve returned to a leadership role in Action Partners and latterly with Urban Vision. As Steve traces this physical journey he also traces and interweaves his spiritual journey as he comes to grips with Islam as a religion and moves from fear to faith in his reaction to Muslims.

This is a brilliant book. It is very timely and was written and published when many Christians are being forced to think again about their attitude and approach to the Muslims they meet at work, down the road, at the shops or at the school gate. Steve faces squarely the horrific evil that is planned and executed in the name of Islam and recognises the wonderful, generous and pious Muslims that have become his friends. The book is easy to read because of its story format. It should be read by all those who have Muslim contacts or who are struggling with their emotions when faced by atrocities done in the name of Islam. (Bryan Knell)

ISBN: 9781850786641

Purchase from St Andrew's Bookshop

Mission After Christendom

by David Smith (DLT, 2003, £14.95).

If you can get a look at this book before you buy it, its purpose and contents are laid out very carefully on page xii in the Introduction. The first chapter, 'Challenges Facing the Missionary Movement', suggests that a number of shifts in world history have opened up new frontiers for mission. It is imperative, the chapter argues, that we recognise these and grapple with them. These challenges are then broadly identified in chapters 2, 4 and 6 as secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. After each chapter (i.e. in chapters 3, 5 and 7) there is a Biblical meditation. For secularisation it is based on Israel in exile, for pluralisation on the Cornelius story and for globalisation on the book of Revelation. A final chapter returns to the challenges of the beginning of the book and attempts to meet them in the light of the previous discussion.

Smith's book is quite simply the best brief treatment of mission available today (the best long treatment is still David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*). It is perceptive and real about the world we currently inhabit ('what kind of day it is today'). It is discerning about the big issues and puts them into historical perspective. It applies the Bible in fresh and relevant ways. It demonstrates familiarity with up-to-date writing about mission and the church. It is radical. It puts us on the spot. Consider: 'The nature of the relationship between the globalised, economistic culture and the message of Jesus Christ has become the central issue requiring urgent theological and missiological reflection' (p.88) and 'the deepest cause of the spiritual weakness of Western Christians when confronting globalisation is the nature of their relationship with the ideology which has driven this culture' (p.89).

For us 'Western Christians' who want to be involved in God's mission and who are living in a 'globalised, economistic culture', this is the book. (Jonathan Ingleby)

ISBN: 9780232524833

Purchase from St Andrew's Bookshop

Whose Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church

by James Smith (Baker Books, 2006, £11.99).

In five short and very readable chapters James K.A. Smith associate professor of philosophy at Calvin College provides a user friendly introduction to postmodern thought.

Rather than taking a defensive attitude towards postmodernism or a nostalgic view of modernism. Smith listens to the important contribution that Postmodern thinkers can provide to our understanding of both contemporary culture and church cultures. You won't agree with everything Smith says but he is still worth listening to as we seek for ways to express the never changing gospel in our ever changing times. (Krish Kandiah)

ISBN: 9780801029189

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