

**A spiritual crisis needs a spiritual answer.**

Up to a few days ago, our national and local UK news was dominated by the coming General Election – sometimes lasting as long as the first 15-20 minutes! It has taken the eruption of the volcano in Iceland to relegate this to 2<sup>nd</sup> place and make us realize that we are not in control!! Regarding the election issue, the Maranatha Community\* in the UK has provided a very helpful briefing on it. I want to share with you some of its content (sometimes in my own words, emphasised in bold or slightly rearranged):

A huge gulf now exists between the public and the politicians. There is widespread cynicism, distrust and apathy. The ongoing expenses scandal and parliamentary corruption have inflamed public anger and discredited parliament. There is a growing irritation with “spin” and “political correctness.”

Increasing numbers do not vote. Membership of political parties has declined. The present government was elected with the support of only 34% of those who voted and only 22.5% of the electorate. **Church membership is infinitely greater than all the political parties and churches play a major role in community life, yet our voice is often silenced.**

Greed, irresponsible speculation and lack of regulation of the financial systems have brought disaster. Bankers’ bonuses continue to be paid and the nation faces a monumental budget deficit. Future generations are being crippled with debt. We have been living beyond our means. Debt has been encouraged, saving penalised. Our priorities have been wrong. Extremely painful decisions lie ahead, which will bring real suffering. There is a need for a far greater honesty about this on the part of all politicians. However, **the real crisis is spiritual and we have yet to face up to this. The truth is we have turned our backs on God.**

**The foundations of our country are Christian;** our legal and educational system, our health and caring services, our children's welfare agencies. **The freedom and democracy we enjoy are rooted in Judaeo-Christian values.** These are now under fierce attack by secular humanist influences, which are openly seeking to destroy the Christian foundations of society. They are endeavouring to expel the Christian presence from the public space, but **the Gospel is public truth.** These are the islands that sent missionaries out across the world, yet we are now seeing a discrimination against Christians for our faith. The state is beginning to intrude into the life and practices of the churches.

This rejection of God and our Judaeo-Christian roots is being experienced in many different ways. We are seeing all around us in society the fruits of this. Below are listed some expressions of this malaise (while the statistics may not be an accurate reflection of either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, they do I believe give us some indicators/parallels for us to reflect on.):

- An expression of fundamentalist Islam is growing - 4 out of 10 British Muslims now want shari`a law introduced into parts of the country.
- Recent research has shown that thousands of women working in areas of sexual exploitation, have been trafficked, with many brothels masquerading in our country as massage parlours. An estimated 80,000 people are involved in prostitution in the United Kingdom.
- There is now an epidemic of Chlamydia here among teenagers. A recent report shows that 40% of those with gonorrhoea were female teenagers.
- 1.3 million children have parents with serious addiction problems. The number of 11 to 15-year-olds taking drugs has more than doubled in the last 10 years. More than 8 million people in Britain are now considered as problem drinkers.
- All the evidence shows that children fare best within the security of marriage, yet half our children are now born outside wedlock.

- One quarter of children in Great Britain live in one-parent families. 800,000 children never see their father.
- Every year 70,000 school-aged offenders enter the Youth Justice System. There are over 400 knife crimes committed each week.
- Children as young as four are being taught about same-sex relationships in a Government-funded scheme.
- Schoolgirls in Britain are provided with abortion facilities without approval or even knowledge of their parents. The majority of abortions in the UK are funded by the National Health Service.

What we are looking at in these islands, as they have so rightly mentioned above, is a spiritual crisis – one that we have not really faced up to! No Government, whatever its policies may be, and whatever they tantalize us with, for our votes, is able to reverse this scenario. The lobbying of our local and national political representatives is not, of itself, sufficient. A spiritual crisis demands a spiritual answer!

In the Beatitudes, Jesus speaks of us as being “light” and “salt”. (Matthew 5: 13-16.) Verse 16 reads: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.” And Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth writes: “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing,” also stating that it is “through us” that “he spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.” (2 Corinthians 2: 14-16) What a challenge! If “Church membership is infinitely greater than all the political parties”, what has gone wrong? If ever we needed a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, it is surely now!!

Restore, O Lord, the honour of Your name,  
 In works of sovereign power, come shake the earth again.  
 That men may see, and come with reverent fear.  
 To the living God, whose kingdom shall outlast the years.

Graham Kendrick & Chris Rolinson.



Thank you for your prayers for us during this time of transition and indeed for standing with us in prayer and so many other ways over the past 36 years. The last “Jesus- our Hope for Ireland” with Youth with a Mission was inspirational – they are truly one of the bright lights in Ireland, for the coming days!! Jonny Clarke (Irish Director), spoke so clearly of the sense that God has given to him, that the handing over off the Centre to YWAM is not a closure of something here, but rather the continuity of what God has been doing.

We are very conscious of the fact that many of you will not be with us on 1<sup>st</sup> May – due to limited space. But do nevertheless pray for us, as we in some official/spiritual sense hand the ministry over to YWAM, and we begin the practicalities of that handover during the following 6-7 weeks. For that too we need your prayers:

- Praise God that Molly and Eileen have got accommodation in Rostrevor. Pray for Norma and Valerie, Dorothy and myself as we continue to seek for a similar door to open for us.
- Remember Aubrey, Jill and Dora also during this time of transition for them.
- Pray that all the necessary finances will be available to us, enabling us to “finish well”: The payment of all final bills including the major repair of a main pipe in the boiler house, oil, food, etc. In light of that – can I just remind you, if applicable, that you will need to cancel any Direct Debits with your bank, that are due after 20<sup>th</sup> June.
- And also, do pray with us, that God will clearly show God’s guidance regarding new spheres of ministry with Him.
- Finally – if you are nearby, over the coming weeks – we have a half-price sale of all the stock in the Good News Bookshop.

*Harry Smith*

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