RENEWING THE VISION
Cynthia M. Campbell, ed. Renewing the Vision (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),
Cynthia M. Campbell is president of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois.

PART 1. Believing God’s Good News

Cynthia M. Campbell, Renewing the Vision (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

The Good News

According to Shirley C. Guthrie, Professor Emeritus, Columbia Seminary,
“the good news is that the God we come to know in the story of Jesus is a God who
invites outsiders in, accepts the unacceptable, choose the rejected, includes the excluded,
and loves the unloved and unlovable – without any qualifications that must be met before
they are eligible to be recipients of such love.”
Cynthia M. Campbell, ed. Renewing the Vision, Part 1, Shirley C. Guthrie, the Good News (Louisville:
Geneva Press, 2000), 5. Shirley C. Guthrie is Professor Emeritus at Columbia Seminary, Atlanta, GA.

Prof. Guthrie further states that ‘to live in Jesus’ company and to be his follower is to
believe in and live by the good news of the love of God that includes rich and poor, male
and female, moral and immoral, political liberals and conservatives, those who share our
religious convictions and those who do not. And in our time, too the greatest barrier to
faithful proclamation of the good news – and the greatest barrier to other’s hearing and
believing it – is the self-righteous exclusiveness of insiders.’
Cynthia M. Campbell, ed. Renewing the Vision, Part 1, Shirley C. Guthrie, the Good News (Louisville:

Good news is that while Jesus welcomed into his company all kinds of people, just as
they were and whatever they had done or not done, he did not leave them as they were.
He invited and commanded them to leave their old lives behind and to follow him in a
new and dangerous life of costly discipleship that set them at odds with values and norms
of the world around them. At the same time, he offered them freedom: freedom from the
self-enslavement of living however they pleased; freedom from the self-deception of
living by confidence in their own moral and religious superiority. He offered freedom for
finding their true humanity in loving God and fellow human beings, freedom for living in
joyful, thankful, and obedient anticipation of the coming reign of God’s compassion and
justice in and for the world.
Cynthia M. Campbell, ed. Renewing the Vision, Part 1, Shirley C. Guthrie, the Good News (Louisville:

According to Guthrie, “a faithful community of followers of Jesus would invite and
welcome into its fellowship all kinds of people, whatever their race, gender, sexual
orientation, economic status, or cultural background. All would be invited and welcomed,
not just to receive everything the church has to offer them and do for them but to find
their places as servants in a servant community (Campbell, P. 9).

Jesus Christ as Host and Guest
According to Prof. Plantinga, Louisville Theological Seminary, “God hosts us in the world. From our first breath to our last, God welcomes us into a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations with the physical world, with various human communities, and with God’s own self. God ‘s all-embracing hospitality is the presupposition for every aspect of our lives –physical, social, and spiritual. Even before we knock, God graciously opens the door for us. Even before we ask for food, God spreads a table before us. The creative, redemptive, and sustaining love of God takes the shape of extravagant hospitality toward all creation. We are intended to live joyfully and generously, assured of God’s gracious abundance.”

One of the first things others noticed about Jesus is that he eats with tax collectors and sinners! Table fellowship with all the wrong sorts of people is a dominant pattern in Jesus’ ministry. When Jesus says, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Matt. 9:13), he used a word that means “call to a meal” or “invite.” “Everything is ready! Come to the banquet! (Matt. 22:) sums up his gospel message. The last supper stands as a culmination of a ministry of hospitality, in which the bread that is blessed, broken, and given to the world is Christ himself. Jesus, the Bread of Life, becomes both host and meal, giving his own body and blood for the life of the world.

One of the most pervasive images of human salvation in scripture is the banquet table, with God serving as generous host. Salvation is feasting in the kingdom of God, where people will come from north, south, east and west to sit at the table together. Their fellowship will shatter boundaries of language and culture and past enmity. In Jesus’ fellowship meals, in the home of Pharisees or of Gentiles, surrounded by thousands or alone with his disciples, hints of this joyful communion begin to heal the pain and brokenness of human life.

But at the center of the Christian story is also a startling reversal of roles: in Jesus Christ, God comes to dwell among us as guest. Jesus’ life narrates the presence of God-with us in scandalously vulnerable ways; as a homeless baby; as an adult with no place to lay his head; as a convict, abandoned and scorned by others. He epitomizes the needy stranger, dependent on the hospitality of others. He asks for hospitality from a Samaritan woman (John 4) and a rich tax collector (Luke 19) and receives it gladly from many others. In their hospitality to “the least” among them, his disciples from all times and places continue to discover that they are hosting their Lord. God comes in Christ as generous and gracious host but also as needy and grateful guest.
Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another (Luke 7:20). According to Barbara Brown Taylor, ‘the Messiah was supposed change things. He was supposed to burn up all the human trash and dead wood of the world. He was supposed to come with a sharp ax, with a gleaning pitchfork, and separate the good guys from the bad guys once and for all. He was supposed to clean up the world, so that people like Herod were no longer in power and people like John were no longer in prison, but Jesus has utterly failed to meet John’s expectation.’

Instead, we find a Messiah who specializes in hospitality to “spiritual weaklings and moral misfits.” We find a Messiah who hungers and thirsts the fellowship and nurture of others. In his openness to suffering and rejection, Jesus Christ as host and guest defies John’s expectations, and perhaps ours as well. Giving and receiving hospitality seems like a terribly roundabout way of saving the world.

The Narrow Door


Walton quotes Fred Buechner saying ‘salvation is an experience first and doctrine second.’ Walton asserts that ‘it is the experience of losing yourself and, by doing so, finding yourself. It is loving God and getting lost in that love so deeply that in it you are found.’

The Hem of His Garment


“Your faith has made you well”

According to Adams, salvation is the wholeness. She had been given ‘a restoration of enormous proportions,’ consisting not only of peace and well-being within herself but also of restoration to the community from which she had been banished. But there is more. Jesus called her ‘daughter.’ Before everyone, he called her ‘daughter.’ He was announcing to the world that she had been and always would be incorporated into the family of God.

PART 2. BEING A HOSPITABLE CHURCH


The Church and God’s Pentecostal Gift


The Church That is Alive


Robert Bohl, quotes Hans Kung:

“To what kind of Christian, to what kind of church does the future belong? Not a church that is lazy, shallow, inefficient, timid and weak in its faith; not a church that expects blind obedience and fanatical party loyalty; not a church that is the slave of its own history, always putting on the brakes, suspiciously defensive and yet, in the end, forced into agreement; not a church that is blind to problems, suspicious of empirical knowledge yet claiming competent authority for everyone and everything; not a church that is quarrelsome, impatient and unfair in dialogue; not a church that is closed to the real world. In short, the future does not belong to a church that is dishonest!”

No, the future belongs: To a church that knows what it does not know; to a church that relies upon God’s grace and wisdom and has in its weakness and ignorance a radical confidence in God; to a church that is strong in faith, joyous and certain yet self-critical; to a church filled with intellectual desire, spontaneity, animation and fruitfulness; to a church that has the courage of initiative and the courage to take risks; to a church that is completely open to the real world; to a church that is completely committed to Jesus Christ. In short, the future belongs to a thoroughly truthful church.

So Robert Bohl announces that “our mission is to be a servant church, sharing the love of Christ with all people. It is brief; it is clear; it is precise; and it is why we exist as a church!”


**To Bless the Whole Human Family**

Gen. 12:1-3; Luke 4:14-30


Chestnut asserts:

To bless people must often entail delivering them from that which curses them, from that which makes their lives less than whole, from that which enslaves and exploits them, from that which brings dis-ease and death rather than full and abundant life.


In regard to the text of Luke 4:14-30, Chestnut emphasizes that Jesus’ focus was on bringing the blessings of *shalom* to all those who had thus far been deprived of it, left out and left behind. He goes on to explain why the crowds in the synagogue quickly grew hostile, threatening even to push Jesus over a cliff:

The problem maybe that when Jesus read the famous passage from Isaiah, he left out a verse that expresses God’s wrath against the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Furthermore, Jesus went on to cite some other Old Testament cases in which God showed special favor to Gentiles over Jews.

The sad fact is that the people of Nazareth were incensed to hear that God cares about the Gentiles, too. They were angered that Jesus should suggest that God cares about blessing and delivering anyone other than them, the chosen people. Jesus was pushing these people in his hometown to expand their vision, their mission, their notion of who it is that God cares about, who it is that God wants to bless and deliver. Jesus was pushing them hard to expand their inner circles. .. But the ‘good people’ of Nazareth wanted to think that they were God’s chosen few, chosen for special privilege, not for a special mission to share God’s blessing with all the families of the earth. They had become so hard-hearted, so narrow-minded, so self-centered in their spiritual blindness that they were ready to kill before they would ever repent, convert.

In the Book of Leviticus laws forbid a disabled person from being a priest, brand lepers as unclean outcasts from the human community, stigmatizing a woman as unclean during her menstrual period or after giving birth. Leviticus forbids same-sex relations, eating lobster, wearing clothes made of two different kinds of fabric, and planting a field with two different kinds of seed.


PART 3. GOD’S PEOPLE SENT (John Buchanan)

**Becoming the Salt and Light**


Buchanan also quoted Emil Brunner to say that “the Church exists for mission as fire exists for burning” (Campbell P. 88).

John Buchanan reports:

“A recent study conducted by the Church Growth Strategy Team of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) revealed that growing churches share one common characteristic – a commitment to mission in the world. In spite of theological and liturgical diversity, growing mainline churches are extending their love and compassion and concern for justice into the neighborhoods and cities, the nation and the world. Mission is the key. Housing for the homeless, community feeding programs, day care for children –vital churches are in mission. Mission seems to be the healthy, life-giving ingredient. And the opposite is sadly obvious. Declining churches, for one reason or another, are not ordinarily extending themselves into the world but rather are absorbing all their spiritual, emotional, physical and monetary resources in the struggle to survive.”


John Buchanan is pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill., and former moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

John Buchanan: We Exists for the Mission – Find his article

**The Great Commission:** Progress Report (William H. Hopper, Jr.)
Blount contends that
Christianity has become a “feel-good” religion. We want so very badly for Christianity to make us feel good. Grace is like syrup: we want it warm and gooey and sticky, so that it not only makes us feel good when we see it and feel it on the outside, it makes feel spiritually good, in God’s good graces, on the inside. Deep inside our happy, good-feeling souls. But to seek a Christianity that makes us feel good is to miss the powerful reality of what was happening to Jesus. And if we miss that, we also miss something special about ourselves. Jesus was hanging up there on that cross because his faith wasn’t a feel-good faith but a do-good and a be-good faith.

Blount informs;
In Jesus’ time, if you were a Gentile you weren’t even allowed in the temple, only in the outer courtyard. And if, God forbid, you were sick or lame or in some other health-related way unclean, you weren’t even allowed on the premises. But Jesus challenged these restrictions. He foresaw a world where God was interested in all people, not just the men, not just the Jews, but a world where the men and women could worship as equals, a world where God’s love was poured out upon Gentiles as well as Jews. He foresaw a
world where those who were sick or lame, those who were lost or imprisoned, could enter and worship even though the leadership said they were unclean. He was about pulling to himself women and children and tax collectors and sinners and prisoners and lame and sick and blind and even the dead, all the people who were considered in some religious or political sense unclean, and he was saying that all this must change. But talking about this kind of change in a world that did not desire it meant trouble. It did not make people feel good. That’s why Jesus was up there on the cross.


Blount challenges modern day Christians:

Some of us Christians have our own kind of excuse notes. Let others do the mission; I’ll put something in the offering place. Let others shout and protest; I’ll say amen. Let others stand up, I’ll cheer from a distance. Let others try to feed the hungry; I’ll donate canned food. Let others go into the inner city and try to build programs of change; I’ll drop them off when they go in and pick them up when they’re ready to come out. Christianity is about risk, not about feeling good. It is about making changes in our lives the same way Jesus risked making changes in the lives of all those who lived around him.


PART 4. LIVING BY SCRIPTURE

The Word of Life (W. Eugene March)


Reading the Bible and Reflecting on History (Jack Rogers)

Jack Rogers, “Reading the Bible and Reflecting on History,” in the Living by Scripture, Renewing the Vision, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

“Jesus said that the whole law was summed up in the two commandments to love God and to love our neighbor. Our Reformed theological tradition is emphatic that scripture has a twofold purpose: (1) to bring us to salvation in Jesus Christ and (2) to guide us in living a life of Christian faith. The Bible, therefore, is a book with a practical purpose."


According to Rogers,
“Culture is the complete nonbiographically transmitted heritage of the human race. We are in culture as fish are in water. We cannot escape it. Our culture fashions the unconsciously accepted glasses through which we view our environment. The result is a worldview that enables us to interpret the reality in which we live…Might our culturally shaped glasses be blurring our vision of the gospel? We can look at our history and become aware of how American culture has in the past blurred Christians’ view of the gospel.”


Jesus continually defied the norms of his culture and interpreted the Old Testament law to accept and include those whom his culture rejected – Samaritans, women, tax collectors, lepers.


**Where Do You Get That Living Water?** (Sheila C. Gustafson)


Gustafson interprets the conversation between Samaritan woman and Jesus:

“Jesus asked for a drink of water to slake his physical thirst. The woman was shocked for several reasons – No Jewish man would initiate a conversation with a foreign woman; no Jew would drink from a Samaritan vessel; and no rabbi would have a conversation in public with any woman. Yet Jesus had asked her to meet a simple need for him. Jesus responded to her incredulity by, in essence, announcing a new state of things – although cryptically: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

Sheila C. Gustafson is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

What Jesus did with her was:

As Gustafson suggested

Reconciliation of ancient enemies, the removal of distinctions of gender or race or other differences among God’s people had begun…She has known estrangement – from her dominant society, from her immediate community, from God, probably even from herself. He didn’t judge her but just stated fact and she found courage to ask a theological question. The division between Jew and Samaritan had been breached, as well as that
between male and female. Jesus offered her God’s eternal life. He had even removed the
 distinction of place and the limits of time. He freed her from the chains of her past. Jesus
 was able to make use of the gifts of a woman – a religiously and socially ostracized
 woman – to bring God’s people to salvation. She experienced liberation and became the
 first evangelist to Samaria.

Sheila C. Gustafson, “Where Do You Get That Living Water?” in the Living by Scripture, Renewing the
 Vision, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), 151-3,

Biblical Authority (Laird J. Stuart)

 Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

PART 5. BOUND TOGETHER IN CHRIST’S NAME

Bound Together in Christ’s Name (Jane Dempsey Douglass)

Jane Dempsey Douglas, “Bound Together in Christ’s Name: A Reformed Perspective on the Ecumenical
 Movement,” in the Bound Together in Christ’s Name, Renewing the Vision, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell
 (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

Through Times of Challenge, Controversy and Hope (Deborah F. Mullen)

Deborah F. Mullen, “Through Times of Challenge, Controversy and Hope,” in the Bound Together in
 Christ’s Name, Renewing the Vision, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

Of Quarks and Quirks (Linda C. Loving)

Linda C. Loving,” Of Quarks and Quirks,” in the Bound Together in Christ’s Name, Renewing the Vision,
 ed. Cynthia M. Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

Multiculturalism or Cultural Circumcision? (Karen Hernandez-Granzen)

Karen Hernandez-Granzen, “Multiculturalism or Cultural Circumcision?“ in the Bound Together in
 Christ’s Name, Renewing the Vision, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000),

Granzen emphasizes:

As recorded in the Gospels, Jesus set the stage for the type of church the Holy Spirit
 would empower by personally incarnating a ministry to the unwelcome strangers, the
 inferior untouchables of his society. Luke 4 illustrates how Jesus, even at the risk of
 losing his own life, revealed God’s clear preference for the poor, the captives, the blind,
 the oppressed, and even for the ritually unclean and culturally different
Karen Hernandez-Granzen, “Multiculturalism or Cultural Circumcision?” in the Bound Together in
Karen Hernandez-Granzen is pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Trenton, NJ.