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1. To encourage *reformation* in local Christian churches worldwide.
2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.

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INTRODUCTION— A DIASTROPHIC MOMENT



John H. Armstrong

I like big and unfamiliar words. I admire William F. Buckley for a number of reasons, but one of them is that he can use so many of these unfamiliar words and not seem to flinch at all. Maybe this is why I also like pollster Daniel Yankelovich's suggestion that we are living through a "cultural diastrophism" in this moment in history. Now, I confess, I had to look up the word, too. It comes from the Greek and referred to "distortion." In modern use it refers to the process by which the earth's surface is reshaped through rock movements and displacements. Put another way, it refers to the moving of the tectonic plates that produce earthquakes.

If Yankelovich is correct, then Christians, of all people, must be alert to these massive cultural shifts and what they mean for mission. When diastrophism occurs in a culture, no one is immune. Nothing is exempt from the impact. Church structures and ways of thinking in the past will no longer work in the same way in the present and the future. Intellectual constructs, paradigms for discipleship, social structures, everything is in for drastic change.

I am persuaded that the Protestant Reformation, especially that part directly influenced by the Genevan Reformer John Calvin, had culture-shaping power. Calvin's vision shaped the

whole of life. He understood that everything was to come under the influence of the lordship of Christ. Indeed, it may not be too far-fetched to say that much of Western culture's social and political force came, directly or indirectly, from the influence of John Calvin in the sixteenth century.

If Western culture is presently undergoing seismic, or diastrophic, shifts, then what role does the church have in this brave new world? I think the jury is still out, insofar as these constant clashes between modern and postmodern ideas rage violently back and forth at the present moment in time.

The Christian church faces the new world with the same message it has had for two thousand years. The message must not change but the church must. The Catholic Church, in Vatican II, referred to this modern megashift as *aggiornamento*, or the "bringing up to date" of the church. The problem is that Vatican II not only brought the church up-to-date, but it opened the windows of the Catholic Church to all kinds of modern intellectual ideas that threaten a healthy confession of the ancient faith. This is why some conservative Catholics now rightly suggest that *aggiornamento* must always be balanced by *resourcement*, or the "return to the sources" of antiquity. In short, this is a call to what Bob Weber has called for in his Protestant work called "the ancient-future" faith.

As we continue to see the winds of *aggiornamento* sweep through Protestant and evangelical churches, we must be prepared to properly relate these winds of change to the sources of our past. Having witnessed the impact of new movements of the Holy Spirit for nearly four decades now, I am distressed that many of us cannot handle the "cultural diastrophism" that is presently altering almost everything held important prior to 1960. We either condemn the present, using modern paradigms to do so, or we embrace uncritically the future, with little knowledge of antiquity.

This issue seeks to put some of this struggle into clearer perspective. Articles and reviews point the reader to ways that we can understand and respond to the present moment in history. My prayer is that you will see how our understanding

of ourselves and our churches must be refounded while at the same time you understand that we must go back, much further back, into the resources of ancient Christianity, to ground the whole business of "bringing the church up-to-date."