

## **Book review Adrian B Smith *A Reason for Living & Hoping***

*A Reason for Living & Hoping A Christian Appreciation of the Emerging New Era of Consciousness* Adrian B Smith, (pp.239, ST PAULS, London, 2002).

Reviewed by the Revd Neil Broadbent of the Sozein Trust.

Fr Adrian Smith is a Catholic missionary priest. His thirteenth book is dedicated 'to the many, many Christians I meet who are looking for a vision to live by which their Church is failing to provide'. This book is in three parts: part one is titled 'Interpreting our Times', part two 'Unravelling the Vision of Jesus', part three 'Living the Vision today'.

Fr Adrian writes clearly and engagingly covering a vast topic. In part one, he helps us 'mentally extricate ourselves from our everyday world to obtain a satellite picture of what is going on'. We are given numerous characteristics of today's shift in consciousness' and quotes with approval Teilhard de Chardin, Bede Griffiths, Bishop Stephen Verney, Thomas Merton et al. Consciousness studies, astrological eras, the Religious Experience Research Unit, Rupert Sheldrake and the new cosmology all combine to give a fresh view of today's world which challenges traditional Christian culture and religion.

In part two Mr Smith succinctly describes the vision of Jesus, the mystery of the Kingdom, the dimensions and evolution of the kingdom vision and 'the Kingdom shape of society'. We are given a 'cultural translation' to enable us to see the difficulties inherent in reading the New Testament too literally and modern interpretations of the phrase 'Kingdom of God'. There is a fine chart comparing and contrasting the familiar traditional understanding of Jesus with an emerging contemporary understanding. Numerous charts and diagrams assist the reader to digest his combinations of the old and the new dynamics of structuring relationships in society. Judicious extracts from the Second Vatican Council, Pope John Paul VI and the World Council of Churches back up his forceful thesis. I wish I had been able to read this at theological college.

Part three is a powerful challenge to the Church to be more empowered by a new relationship to God, planet earth and one another, rather than carry on preserving and promoting old-style church structures. The values of the Kingdom present four challenges to the Church:

1. To recognize and encourage the holistic right-brain values.
2. To accept the ecological dimension of spirituality.
3. To be open to the necessity of continually re-assessing and then changing Church structures so that they are life-supporting, not life-draining.
4. To be open to the Spirit.