

July 26, 2006

TriBakery Group: Christians & Kitsch #13

Compiled by Kirk Irwin

Scripture:

“When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

Matthew 9:12-13

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

John 4:24

Quotes:

“Kitsch may be conveniently defined as a specifically aesthetic form of lying.”

Matei Calinescu, as quoted in [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#), p120

“The sentimental in art, including religious art, usually begins as sincerity. So why does it end up coming across as so insincere, cheap and shallow? One reason, I think, is laziness. We do not invest enough time and effort to produce work that speaks and feels and looks strong – work that doesn’t rely on clichés but honestly, skillfully, speaks ‘the truth in love’ (Ephesians 4:15). Clichés are basically these ‘lazy’ forms of art. They are ready-made, copycat forms of expression that require little or no personal soul-searching or intellectual discipline.”

Betty Spackman, p120, [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#)

Question: Is all kitsch lying? Is the sentimentality in the church only or all of culture? When is sentimentality appropriate? Give an example of good sentimentality.

Quote:

“Once, I went into a florist’s near the end of a very long, cold winter in northern Ontario. When I stepped inside the door I was so astounded by the colour and aroma of the spring flowers that I started to cry. The contrast to the cold, grey days and the shock of the perfume were overwhelming. If I had always lived with that profusion of colour and scent I would probably not have been affected. My senses would have been dulled and I might have felt nothing. In the same way, the proliferation of the pretty and the sweet in Christian expressions of faith has, through repetition, dulled our senses to beauty and over time obscured. Meaning and memory.

Dislocated from sensual experience, images of flowers have become a little more than signs. They no longer have a fragrance that seduces and inspires. They only talk about seduction and inspiration. This is, for me, the essence of kitsch.”

Betty Spackman, p122, [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#)

“Kitsch?”

A species of beauty, which, as it is florid and superficial, pleases at first; but...soon palls upon the taste, and is then rejected with disdain, at least rated at a much lower value.”

David Hume, as quoted in [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#), p123

Questions: Thoughts on the two quotes above? How do we bring the hunger for beauty back into our culture and therefore back into the Gospel?