ISSUE 02 | TRINITY 2021 | THE KIRBY LAING CENTRE

THE BIG PICTURE

CHRIST PLAYS IN TEN THOUSAND PLACES

The Big Picture is produced by The Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge, a nonprofit academic research centre whose vision is to foster Christian scholarship and public theology, rooted in spirituality and practised in community, for the glory of God and the flourishing of the church and world.

We regularly produce publications and various resources, and host webinars and other events, all aimed at exploring answers to the question: *How then should we live?*

For more head over to our website, kirbylaingcentre.co.uk.

The Big Picture magazine is a periodical that seeks to: (1) Educate, inform and inspire readers about public theology, (2) Ground our work in Scripture, (3) Embody with creativity, through art, poetry, music, the written word, etc., the big picture vision of the gospel, (4) Connect with good practice wherever it is found, and (5) Build community locally and globally with our friends and partners actively represented in the magazine.

FORTHCOMING EDITIONS

February 2022
This edition will celebrate the life and work of Hans Rookmaker on the centenary of his birth in 1922. The arts will be our major theme. Deadline for contributions: 15 January 2022. Even in editions with a theme all aspects of life will be represented. We especially welcome short pieces, imagery (photos and artworks), poems, great recipes, etc. See *The Big Picture* on our website for stylistic guidelines and submission details.

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THE BIG PICTURE

COVER IMAGE: *EDEN* BY ZAK BENJAMIN (PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARIT GREENWOOD)
ABOUT ZAK BENJAMIN (IZAK DE VILLIERS)

Zak and his wife, Erna, have very kindly permitted and facilitated the liberal use of Zak's artworks in our KLC publications. His unique view of the world, expressed in his quirky, often amusing, sometimes disturbing, imagery and compositions, is informed by deep thinking and suffering: In his life and works he has wrestled with the relevance of faith and the church - especially in apartheid SA - and has battled Parkinson's disease since the early 1990s. Admirably, Zak's circumstances have not lessened his awareness of the political and societal issues of the day, nor from engaging with an astonishing variety of subjects and experimenting with a range of art-making techniques.

Zak and Erna were loyal supporters of Craig's SA Christian Worldview network and the former incarnation of *The Big Picture*. Whether we know Zak, and value his friendship, or are becoming familiar with him through KLC, as Calvin Seerveld observed, his works will enrich our imaginative lives. For this we thank Zak and wish him well as he enters the eighth decade of his life in 2021.

ART IS HARD

EDITORIAL

DAVE BELDMAN, Associate Editor

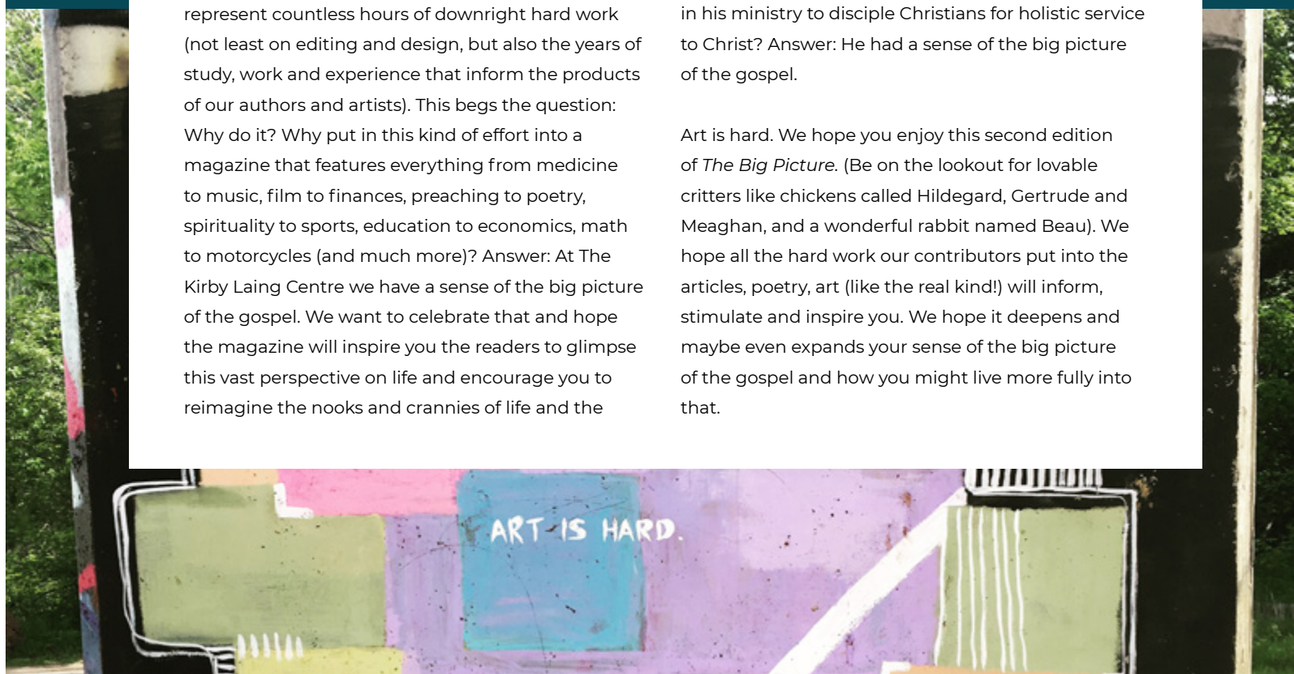
"Art is hard." That is the message my family and I encountered graffitied on a bridge while on a walk recently in the beautiful Dundas Valley of Hamilton, Ontario. I am not an artist, but the words spoke to me. To a certain extent, we are all artists, honing some kind of craft, whether scholarship, music, accounting, construction, farming, home making and so on. I seem to be in good company in thinking this, because Herman Bavinck once wrote, "In human beings themselves, there are not two or three capabilities that work apart from each other; the works that we produce have this in common: they are the revelation of our ability and to that extent are all 'art'" (Essays on Religion, Science, and Society, 254). The very best products of our craft, our "art," may seem at first glance effortless but in reality often entail hard work and gruelling effort (Malcom Gladwell popularized the idea that it takes 10,000 hours to reach elite levels in a given area or practice).

Take the first issue of *The Big Picture* for example. From the design to the contents it all seems so elegant and effortless such that it might be easy to miss the fact that the sixty-six pages of the magazine represent countless hours of downright hard work (not least on editing and design, but also the years of study, work and experience that inform the products of our authors and artists). This begs the question: Why do it? Why put in this kind of effort into a magazine that features everything from medicine to music, film to finances, preaching to poetry, spirituality to sports, education to economics, math to motorcycles (and much more)? Answer: At The Kirby Laing Centre we have a sense of the big picture of the gospel. We want to celebrate that and hope the magazine will inspire you the readers to glimpse this vast perspective on life and encourage you to reimagine the nooks and crannies of life and the creation as places where Christ plays.

In this issue of *The Big Picture* we have articles featuring the Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) and the British pastor-theologian John Stott (1921-2011). The reason is because this year marks 100 years since the death of Bavinck and since the birth of Stott. Bavinck's theological work is powerful and as relevant today as it was in the context in which he was writing it. He also wrote thoughtfully on a myriad of topics like science, evolution, social relationships, economics, psychology, education, aesthetics and politics. Why did he do it — why did a theologian put all this effort into areas that don't seem very theological? Answer: He had a sense of the big picture of the gospel.

Similarly, John Stott was convinced that Scripture and the Christian faith does and indeed must speak into the issues of our day. He published many theological works and a host of biblical commentaries. He advocated a "double-listening" approach to reading the Bible. As we listen intently to Scripture while at the same time listening attentively to our culture, we put ourselves in the best position to allow Scripture to come to bear on the issues of our day. For Stott, all of life was to be lived for Christ and he had a truly global vision. Why did he do it—why did he work so tirelessly in his ministry to disciple Christians for holistic service to Christ? Answer: He had a sense of the big picture of the gospel.

Art is hard. We hope you enjoy this second edition of *The Big Picture*. (Be on the lookout for lovable critters like chickens called Hildegard, Gertrude and Meaghan, and a wonderful rabbit named Beau). We hope all the hard work our contributors put into the articles, poetry, art (like the real kind!) will inform, stimulate and inspire you. We hope it deepens and maybe even expands your sense of the big picture of the gospel and how you might live more fully into that.



REASONS TO READ

BAVINCK TODAY

Craig Bartholomew,
Director of KLC

INTRODUCTION

It is wonderfully serendipitous (providential) that in the year that Herman Bavinck died John Stott was born. Both are colossal figures whose gift has still to be fully received and who remain as relevant as ever. Both were brilliant academics, both spent time in the pastorate, but whereas Stott elected to stay in the pastorate while writing a series of important books as an "organic intellectual," Bavinck left the pastorate for the seminary in Kampen and then the Free University of Amsterdam. I do not know if Stott ever read Herman Bavinck, but he was certainly aware of his nephew J. H. Bavinck's work on mission. In a day in which the gap between the academy and the church often feels like a gulf both Stott and Bavinck model a healthy relationship between the two.

Bavinck was first mediated to me at seminary through the standard textbook for theology in Reformed seminaries, namely Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*. I was also given Bavinck's *Doctrine of God* as a gift. Both were published by Banner of Truth which is typically associated with the Puritan Reformed tradition. I do not recall either having a significant effect on me at the time. It would be years before I realised the profound significance of Bavinck as a theologian. Here are five reasons to read Herman Bavinck today:

1. BECAUSE THEOLOGY MATTERS

> **BAVINCK'S THEOLOGY IS ORTHODOX BUT EXTRAORDINARY IN THE RANGE OF ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT**

In his wisdom God did not give us a book of systematic theology. While the Bible is rich with data for theology on every page, it is not a book of systematic theology. Theology typically sets out the loci of Christian belief – the doctrine of God, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of the human person, the person and work of Christ, the doctrine of the church, etc. – in logical order, and this is not what we are given in the Bible. A way of thinking of the Bible which I find helpful is as the deposit like the silt in a river of God's immersion in the life of Israel, culminating in the Christ event, and then on to the mission of the church. It is this grand, sprawling, capacious metanarrative of a book, as Eugene Peterson describes the Bible, that is our authoritative, fully trustworthy text, and not creeds, confessions or theologies.

Nevertheless, from its inception the church has found theology to be an indispensable servant of the church. In responding to critics and heretics and for our own integrality we need to be able to summarise and set out logically what we believe, and this task is admirably and vitally performed at different levels by creeds, confession and systematic theology. Biblically, we might say, theology responds to the call for us *to give a reason for the hope within us*. Historically, theology has thus performed two major tasks: it attempts to systematise what Christians believe on the basis of the Bible in particular, and in dialogue with the history of Christian thought (tradition). Secondly, it performs the apologetic task of responding to the great questions of the day.

These tasks are indispensable to the mission of the church, not least in a day in which the core beliefs of Christianity are under threat within so many mainline denominations. Every Christian ought to have a vested interest in good theology. It matters! Sometimes one gets the impression that we move from the Bible to theology – which is true – and then it is in theology that we really find our authority. However, it is worth remembering that John Calvin wrote his renowned *Institutes* in order to help people read the Bible better, a service that good theology performs well.

And in Bavinck we find *very good theology*. In his university studies at Leiden University, Bavinck had done considerable work in Semitic languages, and, unlike much theology today, his work is grounded in Scripture as God's authoritative Word, and he circles back to it continually. Indeed, Bavinck recognised the need for comparable work to be done in biblical studies in his day. As a stopgap he arranged for Matthew Henry to be translated into Dutch. Bavinck's theology is orthodox but extraordinary in the range of its engagement with the Christian tradition and contemporary thought. Bavinck had studied at Leiden under some of the leading Enlightenment theologians and biblical scholars of the day, and his work lacks the mentality of the enclave that too easily shapes some Evangelical theology today.

Still Life with Bible, Vincent Van Gogh

2. BECAUSE GRACE RESTORES NATURE

If you look into the engine of any theology, you will find certain basic elements that drive and shape the entire theology. These elements answer the fundamental question: What is the relationship between redemption/salvation and creation or how does grace relate to nature? Both Abraham Kuyper and Bavinck saw with crystal clarity that *grace restores nature* or that redemption/salvation is the recovery of God's purposes for his creation. Creation has been disfigured and distorted by sin and grace is like the medicine that heals this sick patient.

Although more and more theologians are converging around this insight, it cannot be taken for granted. Historically, different answers to this question have been given, answers which typically devalue the materiality of created life and the comprehensiveness of salvation. In too much Evangelicalism, for example, a sacred/secular dualism continues to hold sway in which grace relates primarily to my individual salvation and to the life of the institutional church and evangelism. Bavinck never for a moment undermined the importance of these issues but, through his grace restores nature paradigm, he resituated them within the grand story of the Bible, thereby giving us a far bigger view of the trinitarian God, creation, redemption, salvation and mission.

Sometimes theology appears irrelevant because it is! But this is not the case with a theology like Bavinck's, shaped internally by grace restoring nature. It opens out onto all of life and thus is wonderfully relevant to the material realities of our daily lives in all their dimensions.

3. BECAUSE THEOLOGICAL ETHICS MATTERS

A theology shaped by grace restoring nature flows naturally and inevitably into ethics. Bavinck had a lifelong concern with ethics. His doctorate focused on the Swiss Reformer Zwingli and his ethics and after the publication of his multivolume *Reformed Dogmatics* he worked away on a book on Reformed Ethics that was never published in his lifetime. Wonderfully, this manuscript came to light again in recent years and is now available as his *Reformed Ethics* in two volumes in the English edition.

Oliver O'Donovan is one of the best theological ethicists of our day. His recent trilogy is entitled "Ethics as Theology." Bavinck would have said a loud Amen to this series' title. His *Reformed Ethics* does extensive theological work before moving to ethical issues. Ethics emerges out of theology and theology is incomplete without ethics. If faith, as the grace restores nature paradigm implies, relates to all of life as God has made it then how we live *coram Deo* in every area of life requires sustained attention. Ethics is thus no marginal addendum to theology but flows out of its heart.

Bavinck recognised the need for a theology that opens out onto all of life but never made the mistake of thinking that theology was the only Christian discipline. This insight underlay part of his frustration of teaching at a seminary. The good news of Jesus called for hard Christian work in all the disciplines and hence Bavinck saw the vital importance not only of seminaries but of universities, and, in particular, Christian universities like the Free University established by Abraham Kuyper and friends, to which Bavinck eventually moved as Professor of Theology. Bavinck himself also made substantial forays into psychology, education, science and social analysis.

In a different way but equally important, John Stott came to see the missional importance of ethics and ethical apologetics. I still remember the excitement I felt living in apartheid South Africa when Stott's *Issues Facing Christians Today* was first published. If anything, the need for such work today has increased exponentially as the church is confronted with fast-changing societies and unprecedented ethical issues. Human and creational well-being is at stake, and so too is the glory of God. Neither Stott nor Bavinck ever made the mistake of reducing God to being all about us. Yes, God is gracious and loving beyond measure and has our best interests at heart, but ultimately it is all about the glory of God, as it should be.

4. BECAUSE PHILOSOPHY MATTERS

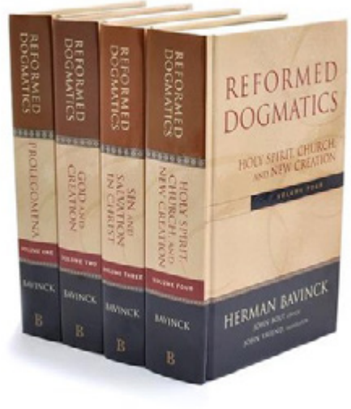
Karl Barth, although often denigrated by some Reformed Evangelicals, must rank as one of – if not the – greatest theologians of the 20th century. Almost single-handedly Barth brought the liberal theological edifice tumbling down, and his rich theology is deeply engaged with Scripture. I am not a Barthian but learn from him

repeatedly. I wonder how Kuyper and Bavinck might have engaged with Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer? I have no doubt they would have read them closely and engaged with them rigorously.

A – in my view – serious deficiency in Barth is his rejection of worldview and philosophy. The result is that theology in his tradition tends to be kept within the theological silo and not tooled for, or allowed to spill over into, other disciplines. Both Bavinck and Kuyper do not make this mistake. Both embraced the importance of a Christian worldview, and both recognised the importance of Christian scholarship in philosophy. To a major extent this recognition underlies the extraordinary resurgence in Christian philosophy we have witnessed in recent decades.

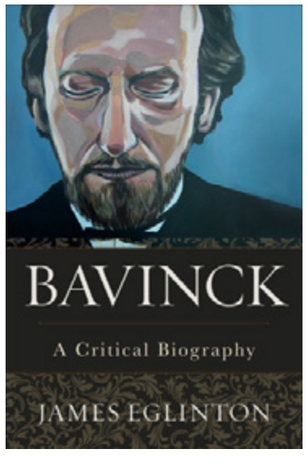
Philosopher Reading, Rembrandt van Rijn

When Bavinck came to give the Stone lectures at Princeton Seminary he chose as his topic *The Philosophy of Revelation*, a sign of just how seriously he took philosophy. In my early years as a scholar, Kuyperian friends told me that if I wanted to be a Christian scholar I needed to do work in philosophy. This was good advice and on a daily basis I remain grateful for work in philosophy and its contribution to my work in biblical studies, theology and ethics. In my view both theology and philosophy are foundational disciplines, each drawing on the other as they become more systematic, so that Christian work in both is vital for the project of Christian scholarship.



5. BECAUSE MORE OF BAVINCK IS NOW AVAILABLE THAN EVER BEFORE

In this centenary year of Bavinck's death, his work is surely better known than it has ever been. The translation by John Bolt and colleagues and the publication of Bavinck's multivolume *Reformed Dogmatics* by Baker Academic were seminal events which have sparked a major renewal of interest in him as a theologian, ethicist and more. More recently his *Reformed Ethics* was published and more and more of his writings have become available in English, as well as being translated into other languages. His *Our Reasonable Faith* has recently been reissued as *The Wonderful Works of God*. Alongside this the secondary literature on Bavinck continues to grow. We have long needed a substantial biography of Bavinck in English and now that too has been provided in James Eglinton's *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Baker Academic, 2020). Eglington's book is well researched and written in a lucid and accessible style, providing the narrative we need to understand Bavinck better.



Both Stott and Bavinck have bequeathed to us a feast, a feast that we need today. Both were orthodox believers, and both found in their very orthodox belief the imperative to engage in depth with the cultures of their day. As the Kirby Laing Centre embarks on its journey of public theology amidst often dark days, it is such figures who will light the way.

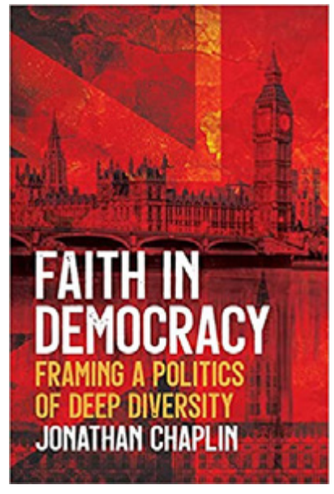
BOOK REVIEW

JONATHAN CHAPLIN, *FAITH IN DEMOCRACY: FRAMING A POLITICS OF DEEP DIVERSITY* (SCM PRESS, 2021)

David McIlroy

Faith in Democracy by Jonathan Chaplin, former director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics, is both a defence of democracy and a defence of the role of faith-based convictions in influencing the political process. Chaplin is steeped in the Kuyperian tradition, understands Christian Democracy, and is *au fait* with developments in Christian political theology, both Protestant and Catholic. *Faith in Democracy* wears this learning lightly. It is a book for practitioners, providing an accessible introduction to a Christian vision for the future of democratic politics in pluralist societies.

In chapter 1, Chaplin argues that democracy "must be understood in terms of the larger moral purpose it exists to serve" (p.10). That purpose is the pursuit of "public justice" (p.12). Public justice "names that part of the common good that falls uniquely within the remit of the political community" (p.23). This substantive objective renders democracy more than merely the populism of the common will.



In chapter 2, Chaplin demonstrates how Christians have reasons to support democracy, as a method for institutionalising the people's consent to their rulers (pp.33-35), as a means of allowing the people to participate in their government (pp.35-38) and as a defence against grave injustice resulting from the undue accumulation of power (pp.39-40).

In chapter 3, Chaplin defends a Christian vision of a pluralist public square. On the one hand, he condemns exclusive secularism as illiberal and as failing to recognise its own faith commitments (p.59). On the other hand, he argues for "jurisdictional secularism," which "holds that the state should adopt an official stance of impartiality towards the plural faiths of its people and guarantee extensive religious freedom for all" (p.57). Impartiality comes, Chaplin maintains, only at the moment of promulgation of the official ruling. Until then, the people and their representatives are fully entitled to appeal to as much of their faith commitments as they choose. Although they would be wise "to offer convincing defences of their favoured policies that reach as wide a public as possible" (p.85), there is no *a priori* reason why such defences should eschew appeals to religious doctrines or language.

In the last four chapters of the book, Chaplin explores what faithful speech, faithful conscience, faithful association and faithful power look like. Faithful speech is speech informed by our deepest convictions, which is committed to contributing to the good of the whole public (p.108). Such speech will treat our fellow citizens with respect (p.110) and be "directed to the task of discerning the requirements of public justice" (p.117) rather than seeking privileges for our own causes, associates or associations. Chaplin's Christian democratic pluralism would give "ample legal space for 'faithful conscience'" (p.127), in which such freedom is not subordinated to blanket demands made in the name of equality (p.144). Christian democratic pluralism would allow faith-based associations to express their religious identity more fully when collaborating with the state in the provision of public services. Faithful power is about deploying "the resources of faith towards projects pursuant to public justice" (p.223) rather than attempting to revive a Christian nation or to seek the levers of power.

Faith in Democracy is a triumph of explanation. Chaplin has distilled a lifetime of reflection on the Christian approach to democratic politics into a digestible handbook and a compelling manifesto for principled pluralism.

Dr David McIlroy is Chair of Trustees at KLC. He is a practising barrister and is Adjunct Professor at the University of Notre Dame (USA).

JOHN STOTT & POLITICAL THEOLOGY

John Wyatt

John Stott, Kieron Dodds

Dr John Wyatt is an Emeritus Professor of Neonatal Paediatrics, Ethics & Perinatology at University College London and an author, speaker and research scientist.

John Stott has been aptly described as a "conservative radical" – conservative in terms of his unshakeable commitment to the historic reformed doctrines of the Christian faith, radical in terms of everything else – cutting to the *radix*, the root. He frequently spoke of being prepared to jettison long-cherished evangelical traditions and shibboleths, whenever obedience to Christ and to biblical truth calls us.

His background was elitist, entitled and conservative. His father was an eminent London Harley Street physician, and Stott attended Rugby school. A gifted linguist, he appeared to be destined for a career as a civil service "mandarin" or diplomat. But his life took a different direction following conversion to Christ as a schoolboy. He took at double first at Cambridge and became ordained in the Church of England. From his mid-20s onwards he was curate and then rector at All Souls church in the centre of London's West End.

It would seem inevitable, coming from such a restricted and entitled background, that Stott was destined to inhabit the comfortable prejudices and blind spots of the English upper classes. But over the following 60 years his challenging and radical thinking spread across the world with a remarkable and continuing impact.

A SPIRITUAL FATHER AND ROLE MODEL

I first met him as a medical student when I started attending All Souls in 1973. At first he seemed a rather distant and slightly intimidating figure in the pulpit but I was immediately captivated by the power and the extraordinary detail of his sermons. I found myself furiously making notes during the sermons, trying to capture as much as possible. It was like drinking from a fire hose.

I can still remember an early series of sermons on "Issues facing Christians Today." This was the 1970s and the sermons were on topics like labour relations, nuclear disarmament, divorce law reform and so on. I had never heard sermons like this. Stott was taking verbatim quotes from the newspapers and commentators of that time and carefully and persuasively showing how Christian truth could engage directly, demonstrating the relevance and the power of Christian thinking. I can still remember the impact those sermons had on me and his example of careful, respectful and thoughtful engagement with

> **"HIS EXAMPLE OF CAREFUL, RESPECTFUL AND THOUGHTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH SECULAR THINKERS AND COMMENTATORS HAS REMAINED A ROLE MODEL OVER THE SUCCEEDING DECADES**

secular thinkers and commentators has remained a role model over the succeeding decades.

Later on in the mid-1970s, I am now a third or fourth-year medical student and to my utter astonishment I receive a message from the rectory. "Would you like to come and have a cup of coffee with me?" My first reaction is alarm; it was like being asked to see the headmaster in his study. I am solemnly welcomed into his tiny bachelor flat, just two rooms and a kitchenette, where he offers me a cup of instant coffee and a digestive biscuit.

And so started a friendship which lasted for more than 30 years. He became a spiritual father to me as he was to so many others. We walked together, sharing our lives and hearts through triumphs, tragedies and health crises from the 1970s until his death in 2011. And his friendship, vision, modelling and gentle godly influence were to become defining factors in my life, changing the direction of my career, my priorities and my preoccupations.

AUTHENTICITY

How did he have such an impact on me as he had on so many others? It wasn't primarily because of his intellect, his knowledge of the Bible, his extraordinary memory for people – it was because of who he was. Yes, he was deeply impressive as a preacher and as a public figure, but the truth was that when he was in private, sharing his heart, and there was nobody watching, he was even more impressive. As you got to know him it became obvious that he lived and prayed in the way he preached. His authenticity, his humility, and his

concern, interest and love for people who didn't count, left an indelible impact on others.

Rico Tice in a recent blog described an incident which occurred as John Stott was on his deathbed. The doctors had said that he was dying and Rico was there at his bedside in the College of St Barnabas. This is what Rico wrote, "I sat with him, and at one point read through John 14. He barely acknowledged me. But when one of the Filipino cleaners at the home came in to say goodbye, with a monumental effort John took his hand and rose up out of his bed to kiss it, before slumping backwards. As I shut my eyes, I can see him giving everything he had to serve the person who had the lowest status. He was a Christian servant to his last breath."

Perhaps the first lesson I learnt from him about being a witness for Christ in a hostile secular world was that it's not about how clever your arguments are or the brilliance of your apologetics or political strategy. It has to start with personal authenticity, honesty and humility. It matters much more who you are as a person than what you actually say. In particular it matters how we treat those who oppose us.

Jesus the Homeless, Timothy Schmalz

GLOBAL AWARENESS

Stott's awareness of and commitment to political engagement started with his experience of work in the parish of All Souls from the 1940s onwards. The parish encompassed startling contrasts – from the wealthy elite of Harley Street to inner London slums, impoverished immigrant communities, bombed-out houses after the Blitz and a significant homeless population. He started the All Souls Clubhouse ministry providing practical support for socially deprived groups and even spent some nights disguised as a homeless man in order to experience the harsh realities of life on the streets!

From the mid-1960s Stott began to preach and teach publicly about the need for evangelical Christians to be engaged in the world on the side of (as he termed them) "the oppressed, needy and neglected," fighting for social justice as well as engaging in evangelism. He started using a phrase "holy worldliness" that he borrowed from Alec Vidler, a theological liberal.

But there is little doubt that some of the most formative influences on Stott's developing thought were a number of radical evangelical leaders he met in Latin America, as he travelled as an invited speaker for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Samuel Escobar, a fiery Peruvian theologian who became a close friend, was publicly critical of evangelicals who opposed the totalitarianism of the left but not that of the right, and who were blind to the evils perpetrated by western governments and multinational corporations in the majority world. Rene Padilla was another Latin-American Christian whose radical views profoundly influenced Stott. Escobar and Padilla represented a new generation of majority world leaders who whilst remaining committed to orthodox reformed beliefs were highly critical of the traditional right-wing political bias, coupled with otherworldly naivety, of much of evangelical Christianity at the time.

THE JOHANNINE COMMISSION

Stott was inexorably drawn to neat doctrinal summaries and he frequently drew out the connections between the Great Commandments and the Great Commission. But it was the Johannine version of the Great Commission to which he frequently returned, "Just as the Father has sent me, so also I am sending you…" (John 20:21). The incarnation of Christ is both the model and the motivation for our engagement in the secular world.

"….our mission is to be modelled on his. Indeed, all authentic mission is incarnational mission. It demands identification without loss of identity. It means entering other people's worlds, as he entered ours, though without compromising our Christian convictions, values or standards."

METAPHORS OF SALT AND LIGHT

Stott was not a highly original thinker, and he certainly would not have described himself as a political theologian. But he had a great gift for expounding well-known biblical passages in order to illuminate their fresh relevance to the contemporary world. In his writing and speaking he returned repeatedly to the twin images of salt and light from the Sermon on the Mount. And these simple but profound images of Christian involvement in a secular society have haunted my own thinking ever since.

SALT

The role of Christian people is to penetrate into society, to act as a preservative, to counteract and oppose the hidden processes of decay. Here are Stott's words: "Of course God has set other restraining influences in the community through his common grace. Chief among these are the state (with its authority to frame and enforce laws) and the home (including marriage and family life). Nevertheless, God intends the most powerful of all restraints within sinful society to be his own redeemed, regenerate and righteous people."

However, the effectiveness of salt, as Jesus had taught, is conditional: it must retain its saltiness. To be effective, Christians must retain their Christlikeness. If Christians become indistinguishable from the rest of the world, they lose their preservative influence.

Whatever social and professional groups I have had the opportunity to enter in the UK, I have discovered there are Christians quietly acting as salt, penetrating, permeating society. God has his people in every segment of UK society. The National Health Service has Christians working on every hospital ward and in every clinic and department. And for every person overtly identifying as a Christian there are three or four fellow workers who have been deeply influenced by Christian ethics, morality and modelling of self-sacrificial service. Although there are deep structural problems within the NHS I have no doubt that they would be far far worse if it were not for the thousands and thousands of Christians who are quietly acting as a preservative. And similar points could be made about many other areas of UK society in the 2020s.

LIGHT

Here is Stott expounding the passage in Matthew 5 – "What this light is Jesus clarifies as our good deeds. Let other people once see your good deeds, he said, and they will glorify your Father in heaven. It seems that 'good deeds' is a general expression to cover everything Christians say and do because they are Christians, every outward and visible manifestation of their Christian faith."

Light penetrates dark places. It reveals truths which powerful people want to keep hidden. Being light means standing up for the vulnerable, being a voice for the voiceless, and a defender for the defenceless. And Stott pressed home the force of the metaphors. "The Lord Jesus called us to be the world's salt and light. If darkness and rottenness abound, it is largely our fault and we must accept the blame."

A COMMITMENT TO LISTENING

Listening was a constant refrain of Stott's teaching and he not only taught about it, he put it into practice. Listening to God, listening to the world, listening to fellow Christians in the global Christian community. His commitment to listening to others was grounded in an attitude of *respect*. It's that quality of respect which undergirds the desire to genuinely listen and not just to pretend. Respect for God and his Word certainly. Stott often talked about humbling ourselves before God's truth and allowing it to exercise authority over our thinking and behaviour.

But also respect for the other, especially for those who oppose us and all that we stand for. Respect for their humanity, for their creation in God's image, for their life experience, for their suffering, for their intellectual integrity, and for the grace of God in their lives. Stott believed firmly in the Reformation concept of common grace, the God who gave good things to the righteous and the unrighteous. So respect for the other leads naturally to careful and detailed listening to what they say, a desire to understand.

In *The Contemporary Christian* Stott spelled out what listening involves and I've slightly paraphrased his words. First, there is the need to enter into other people's *thought* world. We need to try to see the world through their eyes, to understand how they have come to the beliefs and commitments that they hold. God made them rational beings and we need to try to understand their reasoning.

Second, we need to enter other people's *heart* world, the world of their angst and alienation. To weep with those who weep. In everyone there are hidden depths of pain. We can reach them only if we are willing to enter into their suffering.

Closely linked to listening was the concept of *dialogue*. It's interesting that 50 years later the word dialogue applied to political engagement sounds quaint and old-fashioned. Indeed the very concept seems to have become deeply unfashionable, both in evangelical circles and in the wider

political and cultural world. Stott defined dialogue as "...a conversation in which each party is serious in their approach both to the subject and to the other person, and desires to listen and learn as well as to speak and instruct."

Voiceless, Janna Prinsloo

Stott argued that true dialogue was a mark of *authenticity*. In dialogue we share our common humanity, its dignity and fallenness, and we express our common concern for that humanity. Dialogue was also an expression of *humility*. As we listen carefully to the other, our respect for that person as a human being made in God's image grows. We realise we cannot sweep away all their convictions with a brash, unfeeling dismissal. We have to recognise that some of their misconceptions about Christianity may be our fault – and that because of us they are rejecting a caricature of the truth. As we listen to the other we may have uncomfortable lessons to learn. We may have to repent of a lingering sense of our superiority. Our desire becomes not to score points or to humiliate the other, but to enter into their experience.

Finally, dialogue was a mark of *integrity*. As we listen to the other we listen to their real beliefs, problems and experiences, and we divest our minds of the false images we may have harboured. Our goal is that out of our dialogue, our respectful engagement, the truth should emerge. But argued Stott, "as a Christian I know that Christ is the truth and so I long for Christ himself to emerge. But since Christ makes demands on all, I may well find that my own understanding and commitment are revealed to be inadequate. So the dialogue will be challenging to myself as well as to the other person.... It is a matter of personal integrity that I respect the freedom and dignity of the other person, of my dialogue partner, and I do not expect of him or her anything that I am not willing to ask or hope for myself."

How different this is to the vicious and polarised interactions we so often see in the national media, in social media and in the so-called culture wars. How much have we as Christians been infected by the spirit of the age which encourages attack, shaming and humiliation of our opponents?

I had the privilege of observing Stott as he modelled respectful dialogue in many different contexts, both with Christians of many different traditions and with those from an entirely secular background. I saw how he spent so much effort trying to understand, asking thoughtful questions, requesting clarification. This was not just an opportunity for him to go on about his own preoccupations – he wanted to listen and understand.

It is a model that I have tried hard to adopt in the opportunities I have had in public debates and private conversations with academics, medics, activists and politicians in the public square. His concept of respectful dialogue has also had a major effect on the way I have tried to work and teach others as a doctor. I have tried to develop and popularise the concept of "expert-expert relationships" as a model for doctor-patient and doctor-parent collaboration. It turns out that respectful humble listening, careful dialogue and gentle persuasion is an excellent, albeit countercultural, way to practise clinical medicine.

DIALOGUE IS COSTLY

But dialogue is costly. It takes hard work, intellectual and emotional effort, with detailed research and preparation. Stott prepared meticulously before public debates and engagements in the public square. As a result he often knew far more about his dialogue partners, their background and their thinking, than they did about him. Dialogue takes time and patience. But it also can be emotionally challenging as my prejudices, preconceptions, narrow-mindedness and hard-heartedness are being revealed.

Perhaps it's understandable that many Christian preachers and apologists don't wish to follow this path. The traditional approach of just "proclaiming the truth" seems so much easier. But it's not what Stott modelled, and I believe it is not the Christlike way as we reach out to a secular, cynical and hostile world.

PERSUASION

Along with the centrality of dialogue in the public square, Stott was committed to the value of rational persuasion. "We have no liberty to *impose* our views and opinions on other people. But in a democratic and open society we have the precious freedom to seek to *persuade* others, to marshal arguments and evidence in favour of a Christian thinking and Christian behaviour." Elsewhere he referred to developing an "ethical apologetics." We must "...reason with people about the benefits of Christian morality, commending God's law to them by rational arguments. We believe that God's laws are both good in themselves and universal in their application because, far from being arbitrary, they fit the human beings God has made."

HOW RELEVANT IS STOTT'S UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT TO THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION?

Stott's vision of Christian engagement was framed in the 1970s and 80s. But the world has changed radically since then. Is his vision still relevant for the world of 2021 and beyond?

1. POLARISATION AND TRIBALISM

Sadly it seems that genuine dialogue, respectful listening and the meeting of minds is even less common in the public square than it was 50 years ago. The quality of political and moral debate seems to have become more intemperate, coarsened, hostile and polarised than before.

Unfortunately there are aspects of this polarisation within the Christian community too. There seems to be a greater tribalism and often deep suspicion, mistrust and incomprehension between members of different Christian tribes. How often do we see thoughtful, respectful and genuine listening, an authentic dialogue, taking place between Christian leaders of different groupings and traditions?

I am reminded of the words of GK Chesterton: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." The same could be said about Stott's ideal of dialogue and respectful listening.

2. OPEN HOSTILITY TO CHRISTIANITY

In the public square, orthodox biblical Christianity is increasingly dismissed as morally inadequate and even repulsive – homophobic, racist, patriarchal, hypocritical, abusive, oppressive. The hermeneutic of suspicion has had a corrosive effect on trust in Christian leaders, and this has been amplified by recent scandals in the UK and USA.

Can Stott's emphasis on persuasion, arguing, marshalling rational arguments still carry relevance in this increasingly hostile and suspicious environment?

3. "TRUTH DECAY"

Deepening levels of mistrust in all forms of authority and the rise of bizarre conspiracy theories mean that it is not possible to find agreement on even the most basic of truth claims. Over the last year we have seen many extraordinary things. The replication, transmission and mutation of a physical virus across the world has been matched by an online pandemic of disinformation and lies which have also replicated, mutated and spread worldwide. And paradoxically it is turning out to be easier for us as a society to control, resist and vaccinate against the physical virus than to control and resist the spread of disinformation and truth decay.

It may be argued that Stott's vision of rational persuasion can no longer carry the weight it once did, when there is no public agreement on what is true and false. Speaking personally I remain committed to the vision of "marshalling rational arguments" in the public square, of "ethical apologetics," whilst recognising that the power of persuasion is being dramatically undercut by suspicion of truth claims and by bizarre conspiracy theories. Yet my conviction is that in the strange and disorientating world of 2021, John Stott's vision of incarnational engagement is even more urgent. In particular, when words cease to have the impact and meaning that they used to carry, then the way we live, the quality of our caring, the authenticity of our actions, the reality of sacrificial service – these can still communicate the unchanging good news of Christ to a suspicious and divided society. My own belief is that it will be the incarnational ministry of ordinary lay Christians – being the hands of Christ: humble, respectful, sacrificial – that will be the principal means of being salt and light for Christ in the confused and confusing world we find ourselves in.

Sharing Stories of Our Grief, Anthony Vasquez

THE KITCHEN & THE SKY

Craig Bartholomew

Kerkie, Zak de Villiers

The great theme of Jesus' public ministry was the kingdom of God. In Jesus, God was intervening in history decisively so as to recover his purposes for his entire creation and to lead it towards the destiny he always intended for it. Not surprisingly, therefore, the kingdom of God is also the theme of Jesus' longest recorded sermon, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

Jesus begins his remarkable sermon with the characteristics of the citizens of his kingdom, the beatitudes. Reading them today one is struck again by just how radical and countercultural they are. What is not always noticed is that they are also a picture of the king of the kingdom, namely Jesus. When we enter his kingdom, the Spirit works in our lives to make us like him.

Jesus' influence on history is incalculable, and thus, once he has set out the character of his followers, he explains in Matt 5:13-16 the influence they will have on the world. To evoke this, Jesus reaches for two metaphors, one from the kitchen – salt – and one from the sky – light. Every kitchen has humble salt on its shelves. As today, salt flavoured food but in a world without electricity it also functioned as a preservative, rubbed into meat to prevent it from going off. Although salt has the positive element of flavouring to it, its primary connotation is negative. Societies have a habit of going bad, and Christians are to be rubbed deeply into their societies to hold back decay and to keep them healthy. As John Stott writes, "God intends us to penetrate the world. Christian salt has no business to remain snugly in elegant little ecclesiastical salt cellars; our place is to be rubbed into the secular community, as salt is rubbed into meat, to stop it going bad."[1]

Light, on the other hand, is a wonderfully positive metaphor. God is light, Jesus is the light of the world, and Christians are to be lamps shining the Christ light into the world and dispelling its darkness. The German theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, would say that we have to keep reminding the world, that world which causes us so much pain, that it is indeed the world, i.e. God's good creation. Through word and deed Christians are called to show people that the world is God's creation, that despite our rebellion he holds it in existence, and that he longs to forgive us and to welcome us into his kingdom, and to show us what fully human life is like both personally and societally.

One simply cannot read Matt 5:13-16 and think that Christians should have nothing to do with society, with politics, economics, education, art, leisure, medicine, agriculture, poetry, international relations, etc. The good news of Jesus is good news for all of life and we are called to incarnate this news in every aspect of our lives. In the West, modernity has dealt with religion by privatising it, reducing it to a leisure activity and preventing it from engaging the great public spheres of life. Alas, far too many Christians have gone along with this, being good church people but following the world in the public spheres of life. In so many ways Evangelicals have struggled to recover this salt and light mission taught so clearly by Jesus. Some have responded to modernity by reducing the mission of the church to evangelism. Evangelism is utterly central to the mission of the church. John Stott was himself a truly great evangelist. I met him when he came to speak for a university mission at Oxford, and his talks were outstanding. But, what value is word if it is not accompanied by deed, by a way of living in all areas of life that makes our words inherently plausible?

I regard John Stott as one of the great ones of the twentieth century. But, he did not come to this salt and light vision overnight. One can track Stott's growing understanding of the comprehensive mission of the church to his mature vision embodied in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 and in his *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. This was followed by his growing emphasis on ethical apologetics and his seminal book, *Issues Facing Christians Today*.

Once we recover this holistic salt and light vision, a critical question becomes how we are to be salt and light today. Certainly, we must continue to privilege evangelism, but how are we to engage politics and economics, education and sexuality, etc.? These questions require close and deep attention and that is precisely what public theology and the KLC are all about. For now, an important caveat. Jesus warns us that if we lose our saltiness we are no longer of any use.

How might this happen? It is when we cease to embody the beatitudes, when we cease to be like Jesus, that we lose our restraining and positive influence on society. This moves spiritual formation front and centre. Unless we are being formed by the Spirit to become more and more like Jesus, embodying ever more fully the virtues of the beatitudes, we will tragically contribute to the decay and darkness in our cultures. Matt 5-7 contains lots of ethical teaching but right at its centre is … the Lord's Prayer. Prayer flows, of course, from being poor in spirit, and it is the one thing necessary for being salt and light. Herman Bavinck as a theologian, and John Stott as a pastor-organic intellectual, both rightly emphasised that ultimately our life and work is all about the glory of God (Matt 5:16). If we are to enhance God's reputation in his world, then nothing is more important than living ever more deeply into the very life of God, being shaped and formed by the Spirit to be like Jesus.

PREACHING PHILIPPIANS FOR ALL ITS WORTH

Dean Flemming's *Self-Giving Love: The Book of Philippians* (Lexham, 2021), offers a concise, theological travel guide to Philippians and a helpful entry point to the letter. It shows how the story of Jesus and his self-emptying love is central to the entire letter. This book gives preachers a practically oriented overview of the key themes, literary design and missional implications of Philippians. Packed with memorable illustrations and chapter-ending discussion questions, it is also ideal for personal and small group Bible study.

Gordon Fee's *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT, Eerdmans, 1995) remains the gold standard for serious exegetical commentaries on the letter. Fee interprets Philippians as a first-century letter of "friendship," which continues to speak to God's people in every generation. His in-depth approach to the text is consistently balanced, insightful, and theologically and spiritually sensitive. Don't let the commentary's length put you off. Fee is an engaging writer and this book deserves a place in any preacher's library.

For a solid mid-size commentary, Markus Bockmuehl's *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC, Continuum, 2006) is a strong choice. Bockmuehl's approach is scholarly but highly readable. This verse-by-verse commentary strikes a great balance between reading Philippians in its ancient literary and historical context on the one hand and exploring its theological message for the church on the other. Unfortunately, the commentary isn't as easy to purchase as it used to be. But preachers who make the effort will be well rewarded.

Dean Flemming's *Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (NBBC, Beacon Hill, 2009) is accessible and well written. Flemming addresses all the major issues even-handedly without getting bogged down in the exegetical details. The commentary looks at each section of Philippians in light of its background (behind the text), message (in the text), and application (in front of the text), a format well suited to preaching a sermon series. What distinguishes Flemming's commentary from many others is its persistent concern to address the relevance of the ancient text for Christians today, making it a rich resource for preaching and teaching.

Also strong on application is Lynn Cohick's Philippians volume in "The Story of God Bible Commentary" series (Zondervan, 2013). As the series title suggests, the commentary seeks to interpret individual passages in light of the Bible's grand story. It features concise, balanced explanations of the text, but its real strength lies in applying Paul's message to contemporary concerns. The book teems with stories, illustrations and personal reflections, giving concrete examples of how Christians can live the story today. What's more, unlike many commentaries, this one is a delight to read.

For a theological reading of Philippians, Daniel Migliore's *Philippians and Philemon* (Belief, Baker, 2014) is hard to beat. Written by a respected systematic theologian, this commentary puts more weight on theological reflection than exegetical detail. In most cases, it deals with Philippians paragraph by paragraph rather than verse by verse. Along the way, Migliore repeatedly spotlights the communal thrust of the letter, a needed reminder for Western readers. The book's rich pastoral orientation makes it a valuable resource for preachers.

1 John Stott, *The Message of The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counterculture* (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP, 1978).

The Protestant (1987), Titia Ballot

ROOTS, FAITH & ART WITH TITIA BALLOT

Titia Ballot, who was born Titia du Toit, is an acclaimed South African artist whose ancestors were French Huguenots. Istine Rodseth Swart talks to her about her roots, faith and artworks.

IRS: Titia, you lectured at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE) from 1986 to 1991 when Craig Bartholomew and his Christian Worldview Network were active in the RSA. What was your involvement with the CWN at that time?

TB: At the time I headed the Fine Arts department at the then PU for CHE, where lecturers were expected to express a Christian worldview in their fields of expertise. Today it is known as the North-West University, an amalgamation of three institutions.

The Fine Arts department and the History of Art department, headed by Prof Muller Ballot, endeavoured to establish a forum for Christian Aesthetics by involving other departments e.g., philosophy, theology, music, drama and the Institute for Reformational Studies. A series of conferences took place with participants from abroad as well as local artists and academics. As a result of these conferences, we met Craig Bartholomew and learned about his Christian Worldview Network. We then collaborated in preparing a Manifesto for Christian Artists which was published in 1994 by the research committee of the Arts Faculty at the PU for CHE. In 1994 both Art departments were closed due to the university's rationalisation programme. This ended my academic career and necessitated our move to Stellenbosch where Muller was appointed as director of the University Museum in 1990.

How wonderful it is to see how God blessed the endeavours of many over many years, eventually to come to fruition in the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology. My involvement, although with interruptions, in realising this ideal has enriched my worldview which finds expression in my art.

IRS: *The Protestant*, your etching created in 1987, is now the centrepiece of the permanent collection in the Heritage Room of the Huguenot Memorial Museum, in Franschhoek (South Africa), that aims to portray the legacy of the Huguenots with more honesty than the political climate in the country allowed in the late 1980s. Tell us the story of the origin of the etching, its "rediscovery" and the exhibition of which it is the heart.

TB: A member of the du Toit clan donated it to the museum. During the museum's rejuvenation in 2019, it was discovered and chosen to embody the contribution of all Huguenot descendants in South Africa: It is at the centre of a wall of portraits of famous and ordinary descendants of different race groups. Twenty-two years after it was created the portrait's message of hope for reconciliation in our land is being understood by a new generation of South Africans. For the first time the new exhibition now places the Huguenots of South Africa in context to the massive global flight out of France during the 17th century.

IRS: What is the significance of the enigmatic black man superimposed onto the face of the refugee in the portrait?

TB: Two years before the first group of 320 Huguenots – French refugees – arrived, the brothers Francois and Guillaume du Toit from Lille, made their way to the Cape. They received free passage on VOC ships, a sum of money, and were granted farms near Stellenbosch and in Paarl. They were issued with the necessary implements, seed, building materials and animals (eventually to be paid back to the Company). They worked hard and prospered. Guillaume had only daughters, making Francois the father of the du Toit clan in South Africa.

When in 1987 during the "struggle years" I met a young black pastor and activist for human rights named Francois du Toit, it cemented my belief in the existence of a heritage of protesting Protestants in South Africa. More importantly, this descendant and namesake was a fellow Christian, also protesting against the injustice of the apartheid regime. This is the origin of the African head. The message of Christians of all races combatting injustices together wherever and whenever it occurs is what prompted the Huguenot Museum to choose this work as centrepiece. The current influx of refugees to South Africa makes the work even more relevant for our time.

IRS: What is the significance of the documents the refugee is holding?

For Dutwa (1990), Titia Ballot

TB: *1669*: A proclamation by Louis XIV regarding the fate awaiting the Protestant refugees should they flee: confiscation of property, access to education and professions revoked, banishment as galley slaves, etc.

1706: A letter of complaint to the Lords 17 in Holland signed by Adam Tas and 31 Huguenots (including the du Toit brothers) exposing the corrupt farming practices of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, resulting in his removal from office. An act of protest against injustice for which they were incarcerated.

1875: About 170 years later, Dominee S.J. du Toit, a direct descendant of Francois, established an organisation in Paarl to fight for the recognition of Afrikaans as a written and official language alongside Dutch and English at the Cape. Shown is the Emblem of Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners as well as a sentence in his handwriting stating: "Niet ik, maar de genade God's die met mij is." (Not I, but the grace of God that is with me.)

IRS: Your delightful *For Dutwa*, is a reference to your father that suggests that your parents made you aware of your roots. What other valuable lessons did you learn from your family?

TB: Other valuable lessons, as alluded to in this etching, were a love for learning and respect for nature. We also knew that their footsteps were safe to follow. My parents and grandparents were believers so I grew up knowing about the Trinity. However, it was only during my time at high school in the fifties that I made a personal commitment to follow in His footsteps. It was during the sixties that our family began to doubt the "good intentions" of the apartheid leaders. Through our involvement in the work of the Moral Re-Armament group in South Africa we were able to meet with citizens of other races in our home or in theirs. This was very unusual for Afrikaner families at the time. I therefore knew that apartheid was incompatible with a Christian worldview and that I needed to do something about it.

IRS: What are some of the complexities of your ancestry that influence your work?

TB: I honour my ancestors because of the decisions they made in faith and obedience to God. They chose the Protestant way in spite of severe persecution and they chose Africa although there were other options, less foreign and less dangerous. I firmly believe that the reformed faith they brought still enables us today to rebuild the bridges they and their descendants destroyed and that our faith is the only bridge we have to reach out to our estranged fellow South Africans.

However, I still struggle to come to terms with the fact that the descendants of Huguenot and other settlers were responsible for the apartheid regime's atrocities and injustices in SA as were exposed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – the TRC – (1995 - 2002). That descendants of a people driven from their homeland in 1688, could so soon start to "forcefully remove" fellow South African citizens from their land, is difficult to fathom.

IRS: In 2008 you were honoured with a prestigious award from the South African Academy for Science and the Arts with the following (translated) citation: Titia Ballot is virtually the only South African graphic artist that stood out boldly in the spotlight with her Christian-based message of reconciliation and healing.

How have your spiritual journey and your artistic development informed each other?

TB: Muller and I were married in 1968 and lived in Potchefstroom where we both lectured at PU for CHO. In 1980 Muller was seconded to be our cultural attaché in Bonn, Germany, for four years. It was there, seeing my country from a different viewpoint and being better informed about its politics, that I fully realized the evil of the apartheid regime. We returned to the university in 1985, resolved to try to bridge the social alienation in our Christian community caused by apartheid. We joined Koinonia, a local nonracial group of Christians and met regularly in spite of the political implications at the time. It was at such a gathering that I met the black pastor who features as a protesting Protestant in my etching.

After Germany I felt like a stranger in my own country but knew that I was more African than European. I needed to express this in my art, returning first to my roots, to Clocolan in the Free State where I was born on the border with Lesotho. Second, feeling like a refugee in a strange land, I researched my Huguenot ancestors with whom I now felt a kinship. I realized that apartheid has robbed South Africans of our trust in one another and that we needed to get to know each other again. I felt a need to share my culture with that of all South Africans in order for me to absorb their rich and diverse cultural heritages as well.

Cross for the Cape of Good Hope (1994), Titia Ballot

The first works were a series of still lifes in the style of the 17th century Dutch "vanitas" paintings which were inspired by Ecclesiastics 1:2: "Everything is meaningless, utterly meaningless." These paintings, depicting hoarded valuables, were meant to warn the affluent against greed and to remind them of the reality of death. By grouping objects with cultural meaning from various cultures in SA together, I intended to reach out and to heal. This theme of sharing and appreciating other cultures continued to appear in my later work.

Good Friday in Graaff-Reinet (1990), Titia Ballot

From 1988 to 1994 my pastel paintings in large format expressed my anger and frustration at the lack of change and the government's inability to make decisions. Works like *Good Friday in Graaff-Reinet* and *The Bartholomew-night massacre and other Fears* speak to the injustices, historical and current, as well as the fears prevalent in our society. Etchings such as *Cross for the Cape of Good Hope* express the fears and uncertainty felt before the dawn of a new democratic SA. The cross appears in a number of my works in different guises as a symbol of salvation and of our only hope for a better future.

During the 1998 sessions of the TRC (some of which I attended) I was confronted by the skeletons in my ancestral closet. My way of coming to terms with it resulted in a series of four etchings where I deconstructed the Voortrekker Monument, a symbol of my Afrikaner heritage now proven to be tarnished and shattered. As signs of hope and redemption I included either water or fire as symbols of restitution and of the hope to be forgiven by those we trespassed against.

IRS: How would you distinguish between spiritual art and Christian art?

TB: Spiritual Art I see as an umbrella term for all art expressing religious ideas and corresponding worldviews. Thus, Christian art is also spiritual art.

IRS: Would you describe your work in general as spiritual or specifically Christian?

TB: I consider my artwork as specifically Christian because I see the world through a Christian lens. I realized early in my life that creativity is His special gift and I should use it to the best of my ability and as my way to thank and praise Him. My art is the visual language of my faith whether people understand it as such or not. My art is addressed to all viewers and not specifically to Christians. My work is not created to be used in churches but works have often been exhibited there confirming that Christian artists too have a calling to fulfil in the secular world.

Examples of works that have been labelled as spiritual are the *Transcendental Elements of Air, Water, Earth and Fire* featuring no specific Christian symbols, although I had the burning bush in mind. The *Genesis* series (the seven days of creation) is another example. *Good Friday in Graaff-Reinet* seems to be just a landscape, until you become aware of the centrally placed cross disguised as a pathway as well as suggestions of injustices in this town. Good Friday, when Heaven came to earth to save mankind, has inspired several artworks through the years.

In my visual language I often use symbols and metaphors as keys to understanding the meaning. Biblical references, history, art history in particular, politics and literature all feature in my work.

IRS: What did you intend to convey with *Triptych for the Promised Land* (parts of which are also seen in *Self-portrait with Muse*)? What are its most significant symbols and references?

TB: *Triptych for the Promised Land*, comprising the panels *Golden Calf* (1994), *Moria* (1998) and *Column of Fire* (1994) is a prayer for the new democratic RSA.

Life on a cultural boundary has long been a theme in my work. In this triptych references to the Gent Altarpiece, painted by the Van Eyck brothers in 1453, are interwoven with images of the annual Easter mass congregation of the Zionist Christian Church of Africa at Moria near Polokwane. The parallel drawn is that of Israel's biblical journey to Canaan and the South African experience of being en route

Triptych for the Promised Land (1994/1998), Titia Ballot

to a promised land – a free and democratic South Africa. Moria, the centrepiece, with its parked buses, uniformed ZCC worshippers and angels flying alongside helicopters bearing the new national flag, contribute to this festive "Adoration of the Lamb" in Africa. Moria, being the biblical site where God provided a lamb to be sacrificed instead of Isaac, Abraham's son, becomes more meaningful because it foreshadows Jesus' redemptive death on the cross.

The lamb: This work was completed during the years when the TRC held its hearings throughout the land in an attempt to confront the past and effect reconciliation and healing for all South Africans. I have always believed that the only way to healing was through the cross and that believers know The Way. At the 1998 Easter Z.C.C. gathering, TV footage showed three political figures kneeling and praying together: Mandela, de Klerk and Buthelezi. They represented vastly different cultures and ideologies but prayed together nevertheless. This to me was a sign of hope and proof that the Lamb is truly our only hope of salvation.

The *golden calf* on the left appears to be a destructive metal monster as a symbol of a violent past and/or of the violence inherent in humankind. It tears up the land against a background of burning houses and crops.

The *column of fire* on the right depicts a tranquil pond and a column of light around which human figures are standing on each other's shoulders whilst clasping hands; a promised land only to be entered after forty years of wandering in the desert in order to learn obedience to God's word? In contrast to *Golden Calf, Column of Fire* suggests a constructive participation in the rebuilding of the land and the healing of its people.

IRS: To return to *The Protestant*: Not every artwork produced by a Christian artist has an overt Christian message - is there anything specifically Christian that this work conveys?

TB: On the third document in the refugee's hand there are the handwritten Dutch words of Dominee S.J. du Toit, mentioned earlier. The document of Louis the 14th specifically refers to Christians of the reformed faith. There is also the well-known Huguenot cross on his chest.

IRS: As you reach your milestone 80th birthday this year, what are your plans for the future?

TB: It is now time to take stock, to make sense of all the work done during the past five decades. I am therefore compiling notes, images and articles about my work for a publication sometime in the near future.

Being in the winter of my life, I experience time and place anew having a broader overview of time past as well as a sense of time future while also savouring the present. I am deeply grateful for the blessed life I have been granted.

Titia and Muller Ballot next to *Self-portrait with Muse* (2019)

Visit Titia's website: www.titiaballot.com for more information about the artist and to see the works referred to, but not illustrated, in the text.

THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE

KUYPER'S CONVERSION VIA VICTORIAN FICTION

Andrew White

In his autobiographical essay, "Confidentially," Abraham Kuyper outlines the circumstances of his conversion to orthodox Christian faith. One pivotal moment is his reading of a popular mid-Victorian novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe*. Kuyper remarks: "[T]hough not in value, [it] stands next to the Bible in its meaning for my life."[1] The English novel, a gift from his fiancée, Johanna Schaay, had a profound emotional effect on Kuyper, literally bringing him to his knees in repentance. He notes: "This masterpiece was the instrument that broke my smug, rebellious heart" (50).

Though it was the bestselling English novel of 1853, Charlotte Yonge's *Heir of Redclyffe* is little known outside of select academic circles today. In the last century many disparaged the book for its perceived sentimentalism and sanctimoniousness. More recently, feminist critics have dismissed Yonge for her restrictive, traditional views of women. How, then, can the reaction of Kuyper to Yonge's novel (that it stands next to the Bible) be explained? How did it break the "smug, rebellious heart" of a Dutch intellectual in an age when most in his position were abandoning the tenets of traditional Christian faith?

CHARLOTTE YONGE'S ANGLICAN FAITH

Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901), was a prolific Victorian writer, best known for domestic novels portraying middle-class Victorian families. She was also known for her journalistic pieces, biographies (of saints) and essays on the meaning of Christian names. Yonge was mentored by her family's vicar, John Keble (1792-1866), a leading light in the Oxford Movement, an Anglo-Catholic revival movement that was prominent in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Oxford Movement (also known as Tractarianism) was influenced by Romanticism, with its tendency to look to the past for practices and values that had been lost because of secularism and materialism. Tractarians were concerned about the growing secularization of the Anglican church and its neglect of its catholic (pre-Reformation) heritage. As a corrective, Tractarians advocated that the church recover some of the doctrine and practices of the pre-Reformation church rather than focus on the theological and ecclesiastical distinctives of the Protestant Reformation. This included a particular emphasis on the Eucharist.

Yonge was the leading novelist of the Oxford Movement and saw her career as a means for conveying its views to English society. Her lifespan is almost identical to that of Queen Victoria (1819-1901). In this sense, then, Yonge was a quintessential Victorian novelist. Though her views were conservative for her time, they reflect an established current of Victorian thought. *The Heir of Redclyffe* was far and away Yonge's most popular book (amongst one hundred works of fiction), and the bestselling novel in England in 1853. It was popular in both the British Isles and in America, making an appearance in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1869). It was also the most popular reading choice for young officers recovering in hospital during the Crimean War (1853-1856).

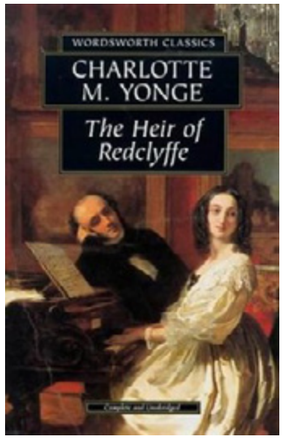
1 Abraham Kuyper, "Confidentially," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, James D. Bratt, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 51. All subsequent references to this source will appear in page numbers after the quotation.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Yonge was known primarily as a writer of "girls' novels," but her work, especially her earlier work, remained popular among male readers, including William Morris, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Gladstone, Lewis Carroll and Anthony Trollope. Given the account found in "Confidentially," Abraham Kuyper, eventual prime minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905), must also be included in this list.

"TWO DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED CHARACTERS"

The Heir of Redclyffe is organized around the contrasting personalities of two young men: Guy Morville, immediate heir to the Redclyffe estate, and Philip Morville, his cousin (who would inherit the estate in the event Guy produces no male heirs). Kuyper notes this structural element of the novel in "Confidentially":

> The deft touch in this tale lies in its bringing together two diametrically opposed characters. These two torment each other, collide with each other, repel each other, and stubbornly fight through all the complexities of a most interesting family life. At last they are reconciled through the defeat of the stronger and the complete triumph of the seemingly weaker. (51)



At the beginning of the novel, Guy, the "seemingly weaker" character, comes to Hollywell, the home of the Edmonstone family, because Guy's grandfather, Sir Guy Morville, has just passed away. Guy, who is only seventeen, is taken in by the family since Mr. Edmonstone is his guardian until he comes of age. Guy quickly gains the affection of Mr. and Mrs. Edmonstone, along with their four children: Charlie, Laura, Amabel (Amy) and Charlotte. Laura and Amy are near marriageable age, but Charlotte is a small child. Guy is warm-hearted, though impetuous and short-tempered. He is a generous character, sensitive and full of integrity. His goodness is internal rather than external, developing rather than set in stone. He owns his own faults with brutal honesty, seeking to temper the darker side of his family heritage.

Philip Morville, Guy's foil in the novel, is an army officer who is accomplished, well educated, and respected by those around him. Prejudiced by old family rivalries, Philip dislikes Guy from the outset of the novel. He interprets Guy's impulsive behaviour as the latest manifestation of the Morville family curse, a bad temper which has reared its head at various points in the family's troubled history. At the same time, Philip feels that it is incumbent upon himself to correct Guy's shortcomings. Philip constantly finds fault with Guy, undermining his character and position for most of the novel. His suspicion of Guy creates considerable tension in the Edmonstone household because of their growing affection for Guy. Philip's dislike morphs into jealousy when he suspects that his favourite Edmonstone daughter, Laura, might be falling in love with Guy. Philip declares his love for Laura, an impulsive decision given that there is no clear path for their marriage (considering his economic circumstances). These feelings, reciprocated by Laura, are kept secret for much of the novel.

HEAD VS. HEART

The contrast which Yonge creates between Guy and Philip reflects the greater value which Tractarians placed on character rather than intellectual achievement, on the heart rather than the head. Guy is sensitive and morally intuitive, having no pretensions to academic excellence. Instead of reading for an honours degree at Oxford, he reads for a pass degree. His Latin is mediocre at best, and he has little knowledge of Italian. Philip, on the other hand, is the embodiment of what the Tractarians stood against. He prioritizes intellectual achievement, though his academic career is cut short by economic pressures on his family. He corrects Guy's tentative Latin and proudly enjoys reading Italian novels aloud in the original language. In keeping with Tractarian values, there is a heavy emphasis on personal holiness in the novel, on purity of heart. Guy, determined to overcome both the sins of his fathers and his own personal faults, actively seeks forgiveness and reconciliation. Philip's primary flaws, conceit and self-righteousness, are less obvious than Guy's and, therefore, more difficult to correct.

GUY'S GAMBLING? THE GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING

The action of the novel comes to a head when Guy is suspected of having gambling debts. Philip's married sister sees a thirty-pound cheque, written by Guy, being cashed by a notorious gambler. Guy, in fact, has written this cheque for his uncle who has accumulated minor debt. In the meantime, Guy has requested a 1,000-pound advance from his guardian, Mr. Edmonstone, which he intends to give to a new Anglican sisterhood (ch. 15). Based on these circumstances, Philip persuades Mr. Edmonstone that

Guy has succumbed to the vices of his forebears. To make matters worse, Guy refuses to defend himself. To explain the cheque would expose his uncle, and to explain the advance would expose Miss Wellwood, the founder of the sisterhood, to the wiles of Philip's sister who opposes her.

This misunderstanding shapes much of the novel's remaining plot. Philip, who wishes to prove Guy's guilt, goes to Oxford to inquire about Guy's behaviour but is unable to find any evidence of wrongdoing. When Amy and Guy declare their love for each other, Philip tries to stop the marriage because of the damage he feels Guy will bring upon the Edmonstones. He persuades Mr. Edmonstone to banish Guy from Hollywell. Eventually, the matter of the thirty-pound cheque is cleared up with the Edmonstones. Philip, however, still suspects Guy of gambling because of the 1,000-pound advance, suggesting to Mr. Edmonstone (in a letter) that Guy should be put on a period of probation before he is allowed to marry Amy. When the Edmonstones give Guy and Amy their blessing to be married, Philip, out of principle, refuses to attend the wedding.

The Reunion, Ernst Barlach

THE REPENTANCE OF PHILIP MORVILLE (AND ABRAHAM KUYPER)

The emotional highpoint of the novel occurs in Italy, when Guy, en route to Venice with Amy, hears that Philip has contracted malarial fever. Guy and Amy immediately go to Recoara to see Philip. Here, as Kuyper notes, the roles of the two characters are reversed: "Philip is now bereft of his world of glittering success, while the sickroom is precisely where Guy can unlock the greatness of his soul" (53). Guy patiently nurses Philip back to health, but, in another reversal, becomes sick himself. In these circumstances, as Kuyper observes, Philip is led "to recognize his own limitations and Guy's moral superiority," and this awakens in him "a sense of discontent with his own character" (53).

Guy is unable to recover from the fever and is soon on his deathbed. An Anglican clergyman from an English resort town meets with the family members to perform the last rites for Guy. Philip, broken to the core and considering himself unworthy, refuses to enter the sickroom. However, after Amy recites the words of Psalm 51 ("A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"), Philip enters the room and kneels beside Guy's bed. Kuyper echoes Philip's actions internally and externally:

> At that moment—I was by myself—I felt the scene overwhelm me. I read how Philip wept, and, dear brother, tears welled up in my eyes too. I read that Philip knelt and before I knew it, I was kneeling in front of my chair with folded hands. Oh, what my soul experienced at that moment I fully understood only later. Yet, from that moment on I despised what I used to admire and I sought what I had dared to despise! (53)

This intense experience, "this internal struggle of soul [which] belongs to the realm of the eternal," marks the conversion, the *palingenesis*, of Kuyper the theologian (54). In the novel Guy's redemptive suffering leads Philip to repentance and the salvation of his soul. Kuyper experiences this vicariously as a reader. Initially, he had been drawn to Philip, whom he describes as his "hero" (53). However, Kuyper comes to see that the "seemingly weaker" character, Guy, is actually the stronger (51).

CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS IN *THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE*

Kuyper's conversion through the reading of Yonge's novel is not coincidental. *The Heir of Redclyffe* is infused with Christian themes and typology. The following discussion will focus on two instances: Christlike forgiveness and the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee.

CHRISTLIKE FORGIVENESS

After being falsely accused of gambling, Guy struggles with dark thoughts. In particular, he struggles to suppress his urge to challenge his accuser, Philip, to a duel:

> Guy had what some would call a vivid imagination, others a lively faith. He shuddered; then, his elbows on his knees, and his hands clasped over his brow, he sat, bending forward, with his eyes closed, wrought up in a fearful struggle; while it was to him as if he saw the hereditary demon of the Morvilles watching by his side, to take full possession of him as a rightful prey, unless the battle fought and won before that red orb had passed out of sight. Yes, the besetting fiend of his family – the spirit of defiance and resentment – that was driving him, even now. . . .
>
> It was horror at such wickedness that first checked him, and brought him back to the combat. . . . He locked his hands more rigidly together, vowing to compel himself, ere he left the spot, to forgive his enemy – forgive him candidly – forgive him, so as never again to have to say, "I forgive him!" He did not try to think, for reflection only lashed his sense of the wrong: but, as if there was power in the words alone, he forced his lips to repeat, –
>
> "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."
>
> Coldly and hardly were they spoken at first; again he pronounced them, again, again, – each time the tone was softer, each time they came more from the heart. At last the remembrance of greater wrongs and worse revilings came upon him; his eyes filled with tears, the most subduing and healing of all thoughts – that of the great Example – became present to him; the foe was driven back.[2]

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

The episode resembles the temptation of Christ, when the devil was driven back by Jesus' resounding appeals to Scripture. In this scene from the novel, the setting sun reminds Guy of the New Testament warning about anger (Ephesians 4:26). His "vivid imagination" and "lively faith" cause him to picture a struggle between his "true and better self" ("the good angel") and "the hereditary demon of the Morvilles" (a fiery temper). The intensity of his murderous thoughts jolts him, and he vows to forgive his enemy once and for all, repeating and repeating the line from the Lord's prayer. Eventually Guy's heart is softened, and he finds it in himself to forgive Philip for his false accusations.

Guy's reflection on the "great Example," the Son of God who resists the temptation of the evil one, enables him to move past his murderous thoughts. In the same way that Jesus resists the hereditary effects of Adam's original sin, Guy resists the demons of the Redclyffe Morvilles. With the line from the Lord's prayer — "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us" — Guy is reminded that God's forgiveness is contingent upon his own willingness to forgive. This lesson shapes the rest of the novel's action. Guy continues to practise otherworldly forgiveness even as Philip remains unforgiving. This is manifested most clearly when Guy nurses Philip through malarial fever. Here Guy moves from Christlike forgiveness to Christlike sacrifice, laying down his own life for the sake of his inveterate accuser. Through this portrayal of Guy, Yonge suggests that suffering on behalf of others is what constitutes true Christianity.[3]

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

In her earliest plans for the novel, Yonge indicated her intention to contrast two central characters: "the essentially contrite and the self-satisfied."[4] This closely resembles the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke's gospel (Luke 18:10-14). In Yonge's novel Philip is equivalent to the proud, self-satisfied Pharisee, and Guy is the sensitive and penitent publican. The reversal of Christ's parable is that the

2 Charlotte Mary Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe*. Gutenberg Books. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2505

3 Karen Bourrier, *The Measure of Manliness: Disability and Masculinity in the Mid-Victorian Novel* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 30.

4 Susan E. Colon, "Realism and Parable in Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe*," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 37. All subsequent references to this source will appear in page numbers after the paraphrase or quotation.

publican rather than the Pharisee is justified. The double-reversal of the novel is that a penitent Pharisee, Philip, can be justified before God (Colon 37).

Though some Pharisees were hypocrites, the Pharisee of Christ's parable does not appear to be. His moral complacency is based on actual piety. This is also the case with Philip, who, as a rule, lives an upright life and does not merely pretend to be righteous. Philip does many good things, including giving up a promising academic career (and entering the army) so that his sister could remain in their childhood home. However, his righteousness leads to the sin of self-righteousness. This is more subtle than hypocrisy and Philip's Pharisaism is not initially evident in the novel. Eventually, Philip's judgmentalism leads him down the road of the Pharisee in Christ's parable. Like him Philip is self-assured but not self-aware. Guy, conversely, reflects the penitential qualities of the publican. He quickly owns his faults, particularly his bursts of temper, and seeks to remedy any wrongdoing. This keeps him honest and on a good footing with others. Some critics have disliked the ending of *The Heir of Redclyffe*, particularly how Yonge prolongs the tale well beyond Guy's death to recount the gradual reformation of Philip. However, tracing the process of Philip's repentance and redemption is central to Yonge's concerns. In the last fifth of the novel Philip emerges as the story's central figure. He is transformed from the antagonist into the protagonist (Colon 42). Philip, in the end, is the rightful heir of Redclyffe.

The Believer, Ernst Barlach

In *The Heir of Redclyffe* Charlotte Yonge's desire to depict English family life and relationships is secondary to her goal to challenge the reader's moral complacency (Colon 32). Her primary purpose is to critique Pharisaism, to expose, through three-dimensional characters and a complex story, the sins of self-importance and self-righteousness. It is not coincidental, then, that Abraham Kuyper was converted by *The Heir of Redclyffe*. Susan E. Colon has argued that the "truest interpretation" of the novel "comes in the reader's imitative enactment of the repentance of Philip" (44). This is precisely how Kuyper interprets the novel. Yonge's condemnation of Philip's self-righteousness cuts Kuyper to the quick and he is literally brought to his knees. Yonge did not wish to change minds through her novel — she was aiming for the heart. This accords with Kuyper's description of his own conversion, which he says, "was not a gradual shift from childlike piety to a sweet sense of salvation, but rather demanded a total change of my personality — heart, mind, and will" (Confidentially, 47).

CONCLUSION

Kuyper's conversion story dramatically illustrates the affective power of literature. It is a travesty that Yonge's massively popular novel is out of print in 2021. This is due, in part, to the critical condescension Yonge's work endured for much of the twentieth century. Modern criticism has tended to dismiss Victorian moralizing as compromising literary achievement. As Gavin Budge argues, however, "to assert that expressions of religious commitment are necessarily inimical to a work's status as art is to make an a priori assumption that the domain of aesthetics necessarily excludes questions of morality." Though committed to a robust Anglican faith, Yonge's novel never tells readers what to believe or how to behave. Instead, Yonge uses the words and actions of her well-developed characters to dramatize her beliefs and values. The tale of Guy's self-sacrifice and Philip's repentance captured Kuyper's heart and changed him forever. In his dramatic conversion, we are reminded of the crucial role that imaginative storytelling can play in the proclamation of Christian faith.

Andrew White immensely enjoys reading antiquated books, and is a curate at Church of the Lamb in Penn Laird, Virginia.

A CANDLE

Istine Rodseth Swart

Photo: Marit Greenwood

On the eve of 2021 our president, Cyril Ramaphosa, asked the citizens of South Africa to forgo the traditional New Year fireworks and suggested an alternative: to light candles at midnight for those who died from the Coronavirus, those suffering from and because of it as well all health workers and caregivers.

Thus, at midnight, on my own, I prayerfully lit a single candle. There was an unusual hush for a few minutes after midnight which was shattered by the explosive celebrations of those who did not heed the president's plea. There had been, however, a pause for some reflection.

While the skies flashed, sparkled and glittered noisily around me, I was in awe of my candle as I contemplated its brave, audacious little flame, offered unselfconsciously and without apology for its smallness.

Mathematics teachers introducing calculus have the difficult task of explaining how numbers can be so small that they are treated as zeroes in certain calculations, while they are emphatically not actually equal to zero. There are some helpful examples: The fact that small currency denominations are disregarded when money is being counted in millions and billions when speaking about the finances of a country, say, does not mean the small money is in fact without value. Yet having to learn to do mathematical procedures with an infinitesimally small, non-zero number is a challenge, not helped by having to use a tongue-twisting word for a mind-warping concept.

If I set my humble candle against gargantuan swirling, pulsing galaxies, I have the same sense of a minuteness that is nevertheless not nothing. The infinitesimally small flame - and I - are not overwhelmed by the inconceivable vastness of the cosmos. Consequently, there is great comfort in the knowledge that small is not zero in the sight of God. There is great comfort in the understanding that our seemingly insignificant lives, our meagre gifts to the world and our puny prayers are not nothing in the sight of the creator and sustainer of subatomic particles.

As we approached the 18th of July, Mandela Day, fuses were lit in our country that ignited anger, frustration, desperation - and malevolence - into a conflagration of looting and destruction that will cast long shadows over our future. Now I set my candle against the darkness of loss, pain and fear, knowing that there are a host of candle prayers sparkling in the dark; knowing that we will be seen and heard by the God of the minute.

TO SEE ANOTHER DAY

Mikael Normann

Busy bodies moving fast,
walking, staring, passing, glaring,
first in line is soon the last,
sneaking, squeezing, awful teasing.
Down the stairs and on the train,
standing, scuffing, gasping, snuffing,
all for profit, gold and gain,
cheating, grabbing, taking, nagging.

Doors are opened out I leap,
running, breathing, paying, leaving,
up the mountain though it's steep,
praying, giving, thinking, living.
To see another day I need:
quiet moment, tranquil spirit,
I drank my cup and this I found:
Spirit, glory, vivid mercy.

Photo: Mikael Normann

1 + 1 & MATHEMATICAL FAITH

Richard Gunton

We all know that one plus one equals two, but can we say what this really means? Suppose I start by reaching for the obvious: "If I have one thing and I add another thing, then I'll have two things." Straightforward as it may seem, on a moment's reflection this interpretation is not always true. If I put one splash of milk into my coffee and then add another, I don't see two splashes of milk, just milky coffee. One crowd added to another crowd yields one bigger crowd. One tonne of uranium and another tonne of uranium doesn't always end up as two tonnes of uranium. When considering things, one plus one only equals two when we know what sort of things to count.

In the case of speeds, it's rather curious. On board a train crawling out of a station at 10 km per hour, if I hurry forwards down the aisle at 10 km per hour, I will of course be travelling at 20 km per hour relative to the platform. If a hypersonic aircraft travelling at 10 km per second could fire a projectile forwards at 10 km per second, the resulting speed of the projectile would be 20 km per second... except not quite! According to special relativity theory, an observer on the ground would measure the projectile's speed to be just fractionally less than this.[1] It's not intuitive, but apparently (and Einstein's theory is very well attested) this is how God's creation of time and space works: there is an absolute speed that we call c (as in the famous $E = mc^2$), and everything that moves does so with reference not to absolute stationarity, but to c. There is no Archimedean reference point within the creation!

At least for mathematical physicists, then, speeds can't just be added up any more than physical things can. What about distances? We all know how they can't always be added up. If I walk a mile in one direction and then turn and walk a mile in another, I'll certainly be less than two miles away from where I started. This is quite intuitive, I think, and the Cosine Rule turns out useful for finding the exact value of such a displacement. This too is a facet of God's law-ordered creation.

Istine Rodseth Swart's insightful piece in the last issue of *The Big Picture* pointed out that numerical conventions, like measuring time in 12 or 24-hour cycles or the binary code of computers, are ubiquitous and essential to our thinking. And at a deeper level, mathematics has its essential

Photo: Mikael Normann

axioms that cannot be proven (there's more to say about that another time!) so that, as Swart says, a kind of faith is also present. Above, I've tried to show that simple arithmetic – and by extension, more advanced mathematics too – has a rather subtle meaning that's independent of the physical, kinetic or spatial aspects of any particular scenario.[2]

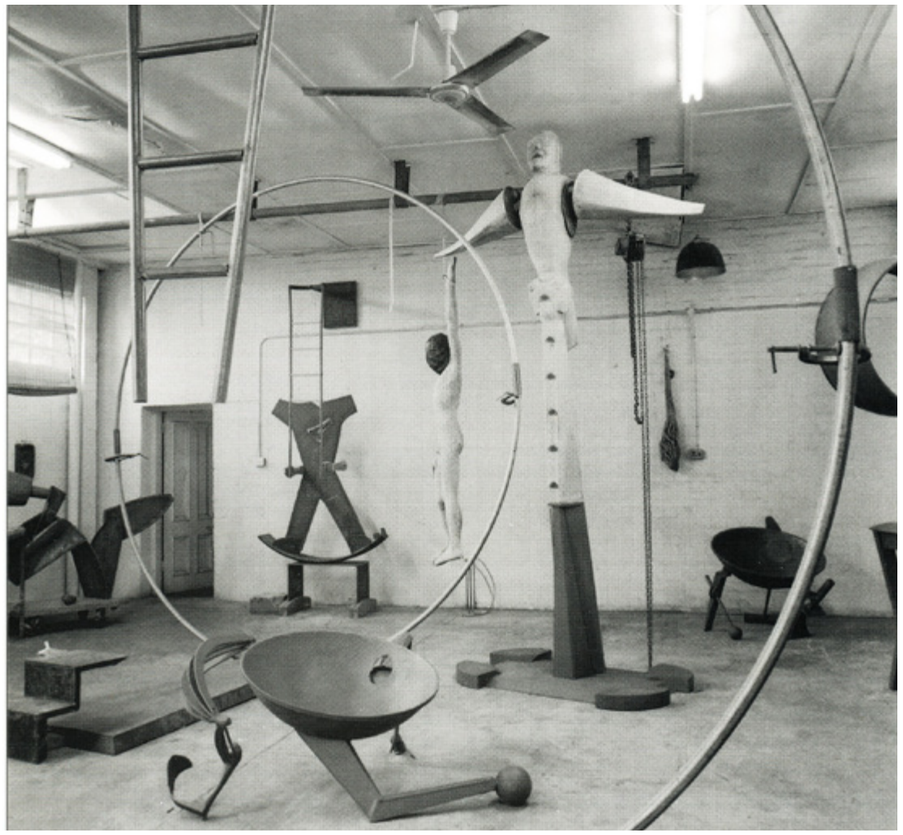
All this raises some far-reaching questions when we reflect on faith commitments. For example, if you believed that all reality were fundamentally physical, how would you interpret or justify the truths of mathematics, like 1+1=2? Philosophers of maths, unlike their colleagues in the sciences, have tended to steer clear of materialist worldviews, but more often they have embraced a Platonism where numbers are independent absolute entities of some kind – which rescues maths but raises problems for its application to the rest of reality. How would all those entities that we know we can count up – from planets and cedars to people and nations, not to mention distances, weights and prices – be submitted to a platonic One, Two or the Square Root of Three? Similar questions arise with perhaps the most prominent contemporary faith – I mean, philosophy! – among mathematicians: that numbers and their relationships are merely systems of conventions that humans have created to play with. Why, then, is there only one overall game in town?

Such problems, thankfully, are diminished for those who believe that reality is a richly-ordered creation resting, as a unified cosmos, on the law-word of its creator. If the word that became flesh is also the one in whom all things hold together, we can rejoice in the remarkable discoveries of how numbers and their relationships seem to be woven through the fabric of space, time and material things – and how the physical aspect of the cosmos fosters living things, which in turn harmonises with the many layers of human culture. Kuyper's worldview, and the Reformational tradition flowing from it, offer a vista in which God's grace permits and undergirds all kinds of scholarship, from maths to theology, advanced by unbelievers as well as believers, even while the revelation of Jesus Christ calls us to turn from idolatry – including any misplaced faith in numbers or equations.

1 It would be about 19.99999998 km/s – just a hair's breadth short of 20 km in the first second. Not much, I concede!

2 I'm indebted for these points to Danie Strauss and Dick Stafleu, philosophers working in the Reformational tradition that emanates from the university founded by Abraham Kuyper in Amsterdam.

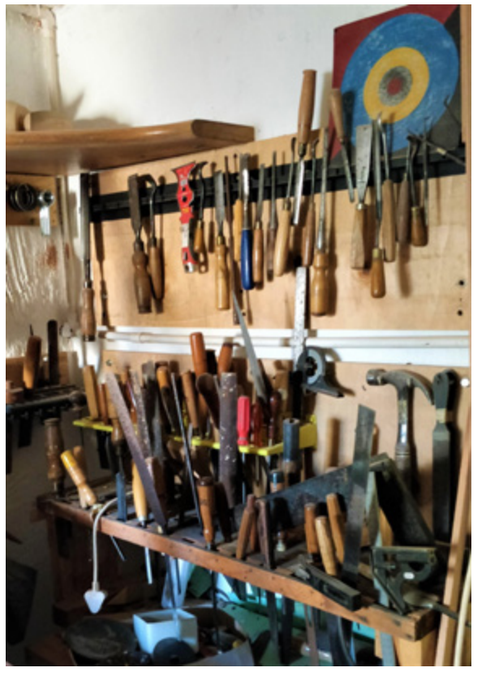
Richard Gunton teaches statistics, philosophy of mathematics and value studies at the University of Winchester.



IN THE STUDIO

with Gert Swart & Walter Hayn

Gert Swart's artistic career has spanned over forty-five years. Born in Durban, South Africa, he began pursuing art in 1976 in the midst of a short career in the Durban Municipality Health Department. During this period, he was exposed to the breadth of racial inequality imposed by apartheid, observing how people lived and worked across all sectors of society. His art has very often sought to address and redress the outcomes of pain and injustice inflicted by the Nationalist hegemony; and as the power base shifted in the foment before and after Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 and the 1994 elections, Gert was creating a body of work which exposed and commented on the pain and hopes of those years. His landmark exhibition at the Tatham Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, in 1997, brought this body of work together. Gert has continued to work despite overwhelming physical-health setbacks. He currently lives with his wife, Istine, in Pietermaritzburg.

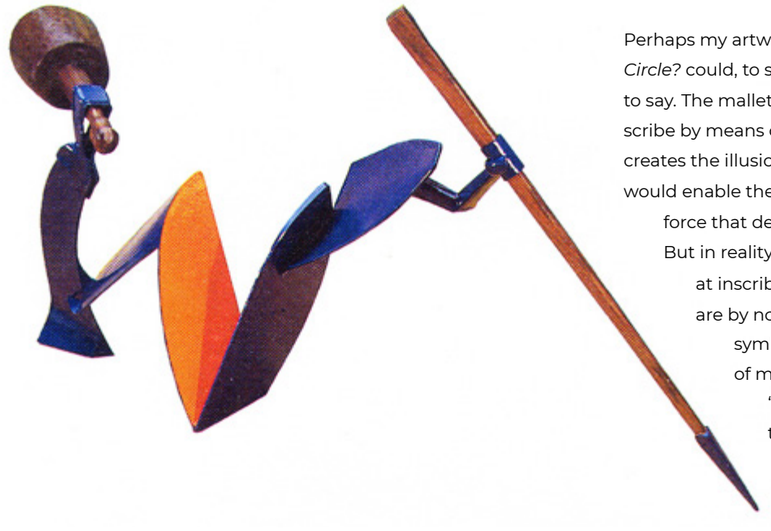


Walter Hayn: The title of this series, *In The Studio*, immediately brings to mind the physical workplace of the artist, and I have been remembering my regular visits to your studio over the years since we first met. You have worked out of four or five different studio locations since 1989, the year of my first visit. What does "in the studio" mean to you?

Gert Swart: I guess to be in the studio implies that I must be *in the zone*: a coming together of pure inspiration and the will to manifest whatever that is — no easy task! It is true that over the years I have had many studios but my primary studio has always been my "inner studio." For me this is the internal space where I conceive my work and a place where I have harboured the notion, since preschool days, that I was destined to be an artist: it is my sacred space.

Although sculpture making is largely a solitary pursuit, for me to be "in the studio" implies a huge indebtedness to friends, family and many others who, in a very real sense sustain me there, especially Istine, who has sacrificed so much for me!

WH: Entering your studio has always been an exciting experience for me; to discover what new sculptures you have been working on, but also, (did you know this?) slightly disorientating. The strong smell of freshly-cut wood and other underlying odours like machine oil and perhaps varnish hit first as I try to come to terms with my surroundings. The eye immediately looks for order, and I always seem to locate your reassuring racks of lined-up chisels (SO many chisels), or perhaps the shapes of large familiar and intimidating power tools. There is a fine layering of sawdust causing unlikely objects to blend into one another: tables, of all sizes, strange metal clamps, fans, sculptures in various stages of completion, and shelves stacked with wood.... and then taller sculptures, behind yet more sculptures, peering out. There is no doubt that this is an industrious workspace, but definitely not of the "factory" kind. There are hand-written signs, note scraps and scribbled chalk drawings on the concrete floor. All of this leaves one with a sense of magical possibility, but also mystery. What does your physical studio mean to you?



Should a Sculptor's Mallet Inscribe a Circle? (1996), Gert Swart

GS: Thank you for reminiscing about my various studios: you are quite the observer! To be honest — and this might shock you — once I close a studio door for the last time I never look back. The physical studio has always been just a space where I bring to fruition pieces conceived in my "inner studio." Although I spend an inordinate amount of time in my physical studio, for various inexplicable reasons, I seem to have a love/hate relationship to it. I think it is this kind of tension/uncertainty that helps me press on and not get caught up in a sentimental approach to sculpture making.

Perhaps my artwork *Should a Sculptor's Mallet Inscribe a Circle?* could, to some degree, help explain what I am trying to say. The mallet is held at a distance from the pointed scribe by means of a rigid concertina-like structure. This creates the illusion that if it were to contract sufficiently, it would enable the mallet to fulfil its function as the motive force that describes a circle — the symbol of perfection. But in reality, this never happens and each attempt at inscribing a circle gives rise to sculptures that are by no means perfect. These artworks become symbolic manifestations of the various stages of my journey and describe how I have been "working out my salvation with fear and trembling" in my physical studio. They also function as signposts, marking the journey and acting as pointers directing me ever onwards to the Perfect One: Christ! Such an approach does not allow me to

rest on my laurels after completing a work but compels me to continue my pilgrimage, regardless of the feeling that, at times, it may appear to be a relentless pursuit after the proverbial carrot: such is the elusive nature of art this side of perfection!

Revisioning Humpty Dumpty, after Paul Nash's "We are Making a New World (1918)" (2021)

WH: Through the years I have been aware that your "unsentimental approach" means that you will without hesitation, chop into pieces a seemingly complete sculpture which is not "working" in your eyes and use the parts in new or other progressing works. This process suggests that the ideas for your sculptures are constantly evolving or on hold, waiting for the right "moment," and that some pieces may take years to bring to fruition. When I visit your studio, the works in progress seem to stand in the wings, ready to be worked on or subsumed, but they certainly catch the visitor's imagination: "What are those dangerous spikes? What are those incongruously 'soft as butter' wooden forms?" One becomes conscious also that there are many uncomfortably realistic carved human limbs and faces, wooden birds, snakes and other creatures, all silently looking on — parts of one sculpture or another, like props from a crazy parade or the sculpted icons in an overcrowded chapel. Finally, I notice that one or two pieces have "centre stage." The newest or current work in progress! How do you determine which pieces you are going to work on next and can you describe the process by which a piece comes together?

We are Making a New World (1918), Paul Nash

GS: Many people have asked me this question and quite frankly there is no easy answer — the choice of "next" depends on so many variables, such as sourcing the right materials and aesthetic problems that are solved over time.

Let me try to answer the second part of the question by talking about a work in progress: the one that appears in part as a drawing on my studio floor with the two sculptural forms. I started carving these forms in 2018 as I had a desire to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1. I have always been deeply moved by Paul Nash's WW1 paintings, especially the sheer irony of his *We are Making a New World* (1918). I carved, out of red milkwood, two pollard trees that reference Nash's painting. Each of these trees nests a large, fragile egg — the future!

In 2019, I conceptualised and then blocked out a base in yellowwood for the trees that needed to evoke a WW1 slit trench and its characteristic sandbags. It was only recently (2021) that I was able to find a suitable piece of assegai wood to make the bottom platform. The three types of wood I used are indigenous as I wanted this piece to speak specifically of the great sacrifice many brave South African soldiers made, far from their homeland, during the fierce WW1 Battle of Delville Wood. The title of the piece is: *Revisioning Humpty Dumpty, after Paul Nash's "We Are Making a New World (1918).*"

WH: Much of your work is birthed out of a deep empathy with the suffering and disenfranchised peoples of South Africa's past, but also the tectonic shifts and torment caused by horrors on a global scale, as in your *Revisioning Humpty Dumpty*.... In my own pondering over many of your pieces, I have found that you never gloss over or try to minimise the pain of the injustices (and human failings) that you allude to, but your desire to seek healing infuses your work with grace but also a call to repentance. Your attitude reminds me of the healing that can come when we "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:14). In this context much of your work is therefore also about transformation and renewal which are profoundly Christian concepts. How would you describe the way your faith has spoken to your concerns in the past and how do you find it inspires your work now?

GS: I am going to answer your question in part by quoting the American artist, Philip Guston, whom you made me aware of many years ago: "What kind of man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into frustrated fury about everything — and then going into my studio to *adjust a blue to a red*!" I for one am grateful that Guston "went into his studio." His work is profound and exposes the dark side of the American Dream.

Now to answer your question: Ever since becoming a Christian, that metanoia moment in my life meant that although I had been "turned around in repentance," my physical reality/history had not changed, but from then on it enabled me to see things differently — through the eye of my heart — and that such a redemptive approach to the human condition was the only true healing balm in answer to the big question: "How then shall we live?" And, what kind of emissary of God would I be if I did not make art that goes some way to bring freedom, hope and love to my fellow human beings and that, by the grace of God, is how I wish to continue in faith to make meaningful art.

Walter Hayn is an artist and a part-time art teacher who grew up in South Africa, but now lives in South East London. He and Gert Swart have been friends since meeting in 1989 at a Christian Arts Conference led by Craig Bartholomew.

Grace (1996), Gert Swart

ON RETREAT: JOURNEY TO GOD

Monique Winn

Teilhard de Chardin says: "Throughout my life, by means of my life, the world has little by little caught fire in my sight until, aflame all around me, it has become almost completely luminous from within."

I was a busy and inquisitive child (still am ...). Much in life captures my attention.

Creation became a comforting and soothing Presence. Nature drew me in, inviting me to encounter Itself. Many hours were spent, lying on my back in long teff — cattle-fodder grass — dreaming and watching clouds drift by. In tumultuous preadolescence, standing calf-deep for hours on end, in the surging South Coast waves, I experienced Joy.

Be still and know that I am God.

This longing to meet with God/Love became the driving force in my first experiences of directed Silent Morning Retreats. A few hours, with a piece of Scripture or a question, exposed my soul to the Divine Dance during which my busy, monkey brain would settle and meet with stillness.

An invitation to attend a weekend of silence at the foothills of the Lesotho mountains presented itself. On the journey to the Wyndford Holiday Farm, anxious questions kept popping into my mind. What if there is nothing when I get into the silence or what if that going deeper into myself might trigger all sorts of traumas that I had absolutely no desire to confront. Doubts kept rising about my ability to keep the silence, to resist the temptation to read books or divert my restlessness into one activity or another. I sensed a gentle nudging ... Come away with Me. Trust Me.

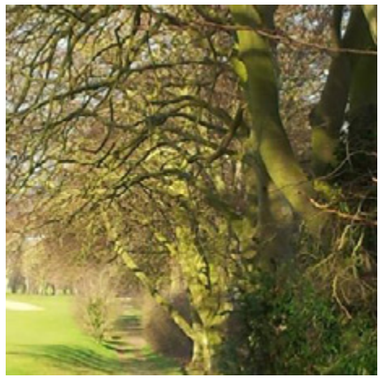


Photo: Monique Winn

Thomas Merton says: "Surrender your poverty and acknowledge your nothingness to the Lord. Whether you understand it or not, God loves you, is present in you, lives in you, dwells in you, calls you, saves you, and offers you an understanding and compassion which is nothing like you have ever found in a book or heard in a sermon."

I went for a walk on that first morning, smiling at the memory of the twittering noises at the dinner table the previous evening, as everyone got out as many of their words as possible "vir oulaas" (for the last time).

The beauty of my surroundings drew my focus. It was wind-still; the clean mountain air, crystal clear sky and winter-gold grass, like a gift spread out around me. Crossing a small stream with cypresses on either side, the question came: Where are you Lord?

In that moment a breeze rustled the leaves of the conifers.

Answer moved the air: I AM here.

The sense of developing a spaciousness in which to Be, to allow sensations and thoughts to bubble up and follow them to their natural conclusion or end, was a discovery that thrilled me.

The invitation to keep looking for ways to connect and encounter God brought me to Ignatian Spirituality and I found my home. God Is In Everything! I found Love! To be reminded that I was made in love, by love and for love. It is relational. He pursues me. He desires that I find Him even more than I do. It all started with Him. I am just responding.

I was enthralled... until Doubt arrived and awareness grew of the many distractions, addictive habits and stinking thinking. How do I find ways/ open up ways/ follow the trail that would continue to lead me in encountering God. How do I help myself stay open and generous within, to not put any obstacles in my path to God?

The retreat practices were one way to find spaces to rest my brain and relax my inner being. To embrace the distractions and find God there too. The enneagram was a wonderful revelation in the journey of self-understanding.

Doing the Ignatian Exercises was a logical next step. Doing the Exercises as a retreat in daily life, rather than a 30-day retreat, for the next twelve months, meant a more focused approach. Intentionally demarcating time in reflection every day meant explaining to those I love and live with, that I would not be available to them during those sixty minutes.

The Exercises exposed me to a variety of contemplative spiritual practices and these Ignatian gifts helped me to develop habits that continue to hold me. It allows me to remain in a sustained receptivity for an encounter with Love.

LECTIO DIVINA OR DIVINE READING

An ancient practice that reveals God's treasures in the field. Meditating on a piece of Scripture and allowing the beauty of a word or a phrase to drop straight into my heart. To sit with it and trust God to slowly reveal its message and speak into my life. How is it meaningful right where I find myself now? What would you like me to do with it? Where can I use it to illuminate your love for me and others?

IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION

Using a gospel story to enter into as a participant and imaginatively discover more about myself and my relationship with Jesus. I found myself shoulder to shoulder with Jesus leaning against a warm rock at a body of water. Using all my senses to fully enter the scene of my choice, to marvel at the way I can smell dust, hear sounds, "see" people and events unfold, while sitting in my armchair on my balcony. This is the gift of imagination, which Jesus used so abundantly in his gospel stories. The Imaginative Prayer can and does lead to a conversation (colloquy) with Jesus.

THE PRAYER OF REVIEW

At the end of a day, just before I close my eyes, like a hunting dog sniffing down a trail, I scroll through the events of the day and notice: Where did I feel an increase of love, a sense of God at work in me and the others. The graced moments. Where did I not have this sense? What felt heavy, hard, sad...? What do I desire for the next day? Holding this all up to the One who loves me, my life and my being, I drift off..

During one of the required weekend retreats I found myself in a faith crisis. A sense of darkness, loneliness, an absence from Love. Frightening. What was this all about? Why? No comforting answer came back. St Ignatius' advice for moments like these, is to keep going. Keep showing up to the point of extending your quiet time by five minutes, despite the urge not to have one at all.

Isaiah 30:15: In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength.

The biggie was an 8-day retreat. If quiet weekend retreats were dipping a toe to test the ocean of silence, this was like flinging myself fully clothed into the deep end.

The retreat location on the KwaZulu-Natal coast. A sea view and the sound of the waves. Tempting, desirable ... irresistible. The first few days were spent dealing with the monkey mind rebelling, baulking at the monotony, casting around for anything that would help the sense of being stuck. An experienced, sensitive spiritual director meets with you once a day and together you listen for signs of God in the daily rhythm, noticing life-giving moments, consoling, inviting, gentle... Like falling into a warm embrace. A gift that continues to give.

In community, moving past each other, coming together for meals and end-of-day services, our beings communicate wordlessly. I hold moments of Glorious Encounter in those eight days like treasures in a field.

Sitting on a wet beach, just before sunrise, my eyes closed, sensing movement, I saw hundreds of the shy, elusive sand crabs all looking in the same direction as me, motionless. For several minutes the crabs and I sat, revelling in the Moment. The sun disappeared, behind the clouds, and so did the crabs.

In the spaciousness of silence God pours Himself out all day long, singing His presence out to All things, revealing His love to all His beloveds. In my willingness to hear His song my capacity for love and service increases moment by moment.

"There is more prayer in the scrapyards of our hearts than we imagine. The pearl of great price lies hidden in the cracks of the paving stones we walk" (Margaret Silf: *Taste and See*). Adventuring into Prayer.

Monique Winn, who lives in Pretoria, RSA, trained as a Spiritual Director with the Jesuit Institute. She is currently studying the mystics through the Center for Action and Contemplation's Living School in Albuquerque, NM.

(Photos supplied by Wyndford Holiday Farm, see www.wyndford.co.za.)

WHAT GIVES YOU LIFE?

Jenny Taylor

When I got my chickens I cried. I was born on a Land Settlement Association smallholding with pigs, commercially-grown salad vegetables for Covent Garden market – and chickens. My threat in moments of high dudgeon in the city was to "go home and grow potatoes." Well, now I've done it. I have lived in London on and off for 40 years. But here I am, in Suffolk for good, because of lockdown. Lockdown forced me to decide: London or here. I was actually forbidden by the government from travelling between the two, and I couldn't risk "doing a Dom" and sneaking away "for family reasons," infecting the nation. It is odd how things work out.

My chickens all have names, naturally, so they'll never end up as *coq au vin*. I couldn't bear to wring their necks now, even though I often threaten them when they jump onto the table and snatch a crisp when I'm chilling with a beer at the end of the day. There's Hildegard – the one who is a bit separate, and I fancy somewhat mystical therefore. There's Gertrude, dirty Gertie who never seems to have a clean petticoat. And there's Meaghan, dark and lustrous, whose distant cousins occupy a California hen coop much beloved of junior royals.

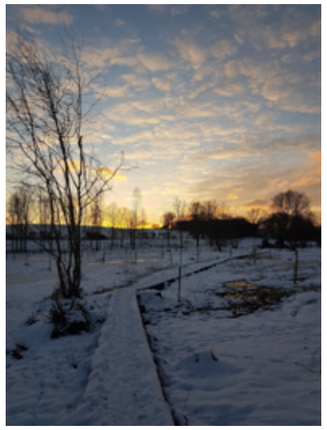


Photo: Jenny Taylor

My chickens are hilarious, and so feminine, they couldn't possibly be gender neutral. They stick to each other like a girl band (except when Hildegard is feeling mystical), yet boss each other furiously, jostling and jumping on each other to get at their feed. They waddle towards you comically like fat ladies in skirts running to catch a bus. They burble loud and proud as they sit to lay. And yes, they do actually *lay eggs*. Three a day. *That's not something a cock can do.*

They give me life. They force me to get up at dawn in all weathers to free them from their coop, and I've seen the sun coming deep yellow like an egg yoke and spilling over the hill into the frost and turning it pink. And I'm out there again at night in the just-dark to shut them in again, in case Monsieur Renard pays a twilight call. The local pub is called The Fox – so I'm not taking any chances.

Local chaps made the coop and the chicken run for a consideration, and that's a connection I've now got with the locals. The one with the ponytail worked as a shipwright at Felixstowe Docks and is married to a Royal Ballerina. Now that's something I'd not have known otherwise.

I feel rich beyond measure. All those little spherical packs of protein, so beautiful to behold, to taste, to treasure: perfectly oval, brown, warm to the touch and ready to be given away at a moment's notice, for joy.

I'm only playing of course. Real smallholding is tough, physical, relentless. Chickens get pests and diseases, eggs need grading and stamping, markets can be ruthless. But I believe that if everyone grew some fraction of their own food, and if it were a legal requirement warranting perhaps a small tax rebate, oh how happy and healthy we all would be!

Photo: Jan Kalish

Dr Jenny Taylor is the Kirby Laing Research Fellow in Media, Journalism and Communication and lives where she was born, on a smallholding in Suffolk, England.

SUBVERSIVE SABBATH

Genevieve Wedgbury

When was the last time you read something that changed the way you do life? (Not including the Bible of course!)

This morning I woke up and as my husband and I came to, we greeted each other with "happy Sabbath Sunday!" A day every week we look forward to immensely; a day of unashamed laziness. (Except it's not at all; it's allowing me the time and space to do this!) This new routine was birthed in my reading of *Subversive Sabbath* by A.J. Swoboda (2018), which I can't recommend highly enough.

It resonated with me particularly because I am so mission minded and driven. I was the kind of person (and to some extent still am) who couldn't relax until everything was clean, ordered and tidy! This really is tail-wagging-the-dog living; it is exhausting and belies real pride. Though God has unbelievably given us a pivotal role in his plan, it is ultimately he, and not we, that "holds all things together by his word" (Hebrews 1:3).

Photo: Jonathan Wedgbury

With this in mind I copied the author's household practice of marking the Sabbath with the defiant act of not making the bed in the morning! It is a day of allowing things to be — to be a little less than perfect and being okay with that and resisting the need to control. God's provision and presence are enough.

There are always so many things to do. And as our lives expand so do our responsibilities. Trying to do things from a place of joy is often eclipsed by the pressure to get things done. Observing the Sabbath is an opportunity to enjoy the "I Am" of God's very nature rather than our bent to believe that who we are is inextricably bound by what we do.

In the course of reading and digesting the book our Sabbath habits have evolved. We started Sabbathing on Saturdays and Swoboda is keen to emphasise throughout the importance of resisting a religious and legalistic approach to Sabbath rest. In an ideal world, he asserts, all God's people would rest on the same day each week; an incredible witness and act of worship in a non-stop world. But this is simply not realistic. However, since there was no material reason for Jon and I not to Sabbath on the Lord's Day, coupled with our history as a nation of Sunday as a day of rest, and its intrinsic relationship to worship, I felt compelled to change our Sabbath day. It is also easier to say to people there are certain things we don't do on Sundays because there is still a vestige of appreciation here for Sunday as a slower day.

What might we refuse on our Sabbath day? Swoboda makes a compelling argument for avoiding consumerism on the Sabbath. Sabbath is not to be an individualistic and selfish pursuit but an invitation to others to enter into rest and to enable them to do so as well. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a crippling reminder that the huge wheels of Commerce cannot be driven at any cost. The same driven mentality that keeps them turning is surely the same mindset that displaces God as the one upon whom all things rely. Sundays for us now are days primarily at home away from our mobile phones, enjoying the things we have in front of us. It is a day for delight: "Sabbath is a time for creation to play in the world of God once again — as re-creation. Sabbath is the celebration of

OBSERVING THE SABBATH IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY THE "I AM" OF GOD'S VERY NATURE RATHER THAN OUR BENT TO BELIEVE THAT WHO WE ARE IS INEXTRICABLY BOUND BY WHAT WE DO

God's life and his work in our lives." But if the thought of taking a day out fills you with dread you are not alone. So counterintuitive is our desire to do, Swoboda emphasises that we should expect to find it difficult!

Conversely, the author rightly asserts that a day of Sabbath rest may appear a very bourgeois privilege to some people, and perhaps even an insult. For some the possibility of a day of rest is a dream and a far cry from their current reality. But for those of us who have the choice Swoboda exhorts us to take it, precisely because ontologically, by our very practice of rest, we are affirming it for the whole of the created order. (The book also explores the importance of Sabbath rest for the *land*, of huge importance in the current ecological crisis, and for animals, equally important as we consider sustainable food sources for the future.)

In one of my favourite quotes from the book the author writes and quotes, "The root sin of busyness is sloth — that laziness of spirit in which the muscles of intention and discernment and boundary have atrophied. In sloth we refuse to do 'what we are created to do as beings made in the image of God and saved by the cross of Christ'." In another powerful quote Swoboda references sociologist Phillip Rieff: "Religious man was born to be saved … psychological man is born to be pleased." In Sabbathing we allow ourselves to be continually saved by Christ through our posture of dependency: "Sabbath is God finishing us, fulfilling us." And so, we are encouraged by the author to take any opportunity to practise rest even if that is only half an hour.

I end with a beautiful quote Swoboda uses, by Donna Schaper, which expresses the true spirit of Sabbath:

"Sabbath keeping is a spiritual strategy: it is a kind of judo. The world's commands are heavy; we respond with light moves. The world says work; we play. The world says go fast; we go slow. These light moves carry Sabbath into our days and God into our lives."

Happy resting!

Photo: Genevieve Wedgbury

Genevieve Wedgbury is just completing co-producing and presenting her second series of Women Together for Radio Maria, England. She has an MA in European Classical Acting and a BA (Hons) in Theology.

PIXAR'S *SOUL* AND THE JOY OF INCARNATION

Josh Larsen

Editor's note: This post contains spoilers for Soul.

Some of Pixar's best movies can be summed up in a phrase: the inner lives of toys (Toy Story); a rat becomes a chef (Ratatouille); a family of superheroes (The Incredibles). And then there are those Pixar films that are a bit more complicated. Add Soul to the latter group.

As its title suggests, Soul deals with the afterlife — and a curious afterlife it is. After tumbling into a New York City manhole and falling into a coma, jazz pianist and middle-school band teacher Joe Gardner (voiced by Jamie Foxx) finds himself in a spiritual way station, where his soul takes the form of a translucent, turquoise, Joe-shaped blob. Older souls, done with their time on Earth, line up to ride a conveyor belt into the "Great Beyond," while newborn souls receive basic training before being sent to Earth as babies. Overseeing all of this are spiritual guides who are each named Jerry and consist of continually changing, squiggly lines — something like Picasso sketches come to life.

Joe isn't ready for the Great Beyond, especially considering he was just about to get his big break on Earth: filling in as pianist for an esteemed jazz quartet. And so he teams up with a new soul named 22 (Tina Fey) who doesn't want to be born. Together they try to manipulate the system, but their efforts backfire, sending both souls tumbling back to Earth — where 22 lands in Joe's resuscitated body and Joe lands in a cat.

That was a lot of plot; you'll have to trust me when I say that directors Pete Docter and Kemp Powers, who wrote the screenplay alongside Mike Jones, deftly navigate it with bright animation, brisk action and clever humour. (When the Disney theme is played over the Magic Kingdom logo at the beginning, it's in the off-key manner of a middle-school band warming up their instruments.) Given its convoluted premise, Soul might seem ripe for a reflection on the afterlife, but the movie mostly struck me as something else: a stirring, affirming parable about the Incarnation, in which "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Outside of Advent, the Incarnation is usually discussed in relation to suffering. A great distinction of the Christian faith, after all, is that we worship a God who personally knows our pain. Christmas, for all its joy, is Jesus' baby step toward Good Friday, where "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross." Yet perhaps sometimes we move past Christmas too quickly. Perhaps it's also worth wondering what Christ might have loved about life on Earth.

Soul can help with that. Consider the two souls at the heart of the movie. Stuck in the cat's body, Joe admittedly gets the bad end of the bargain (especially when he tries to use his paws to trim his own hair; it doesn't go well). But 22 — initially reluctant to leave her cushy spiritual realm — begins to come around after experiencing what Joe calls "regular old living": pizza, lollipops, jazz. There are also two conversations 22 has (in Joe's body) — one with his mother, another with a struggling trombone student — that offer her the feeling of true human connection. And 22's epiphany comes from something as common (yet miraculous) as a whirlybird maple seed that flutters playfully about, before gently landing in Joe's open palm.

When asked by one of the Jerrys, near the end of the film, how he eventually convinced 22 to be born, Joe offers, "I just let her walk a mile in my shoes, you could say." Did Jesus have such moments while walking in our shoes? Not pizza and lollipops, but similarly simple earthly pleasures?

Perhaps this is a reason why the Incarnation began with a baby. It's worth pointing out that "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" could have come in any form — a notion that the design of those squiggly Jerrys suggests. But a baby really does seem most fitting. The fragility, the vulnerability, the innocence — yes, all that. But also the wonder. The way an infant — even, we have to imagine, baby Jesus — looks upon the common gifts of the world, such as maple seeds, as precious jewels. The way a toddler is amazed, simply amazed, by how high she can hop.

This is not just a theological thought exercise, but also a model for a way of living. In Soul, as he watches 22's growing joy in the world, Joe realizes that he's maybe undersold "regular old living." He's tied his entire sense of self toward getting that gig — realizing his dream — to the point that he had begun to take things like pizza, lollipops, caring mothers and appreciative students for granted. Yes, it's possible that God's intent for Joe was to become a famous jazz musician. But he was meant to catch whirlybirds too.

Josh Larsen is editor of *Think Christian* and host/producer of the TC podcast. He's also the co-host of Filmspotting and author of *Movies Are Prayers*. You can connect with him on Facebook, Twitter and Letterboxd.

The article "Pixar's Soul and the Joy of Incarnation" first appeared at thinkchristian.net and is republished here with permission.

THE PIZZA BAIT

Diana Salgado

Before becoming a Christian and more specifically during my high school days, when following the steps of my entrepreneur father, I decided to study food engineering in an attempt to create my own company and become economically independent. My strong desires to leave home and buy a nice flat and a sporty car were the triggers of my life during those days. I didn't know God had a different idea ...

In the first year of my undergraduate degree, I started working in the lab with a graduate student of food technology (now called food engineering). He was attempting to add omega oils from fish to bread. But whether or not the taste panel managed to notice if the bread tasted like fish, I managed to fall in love with something I thought I was never going to like: science.

Photo: Jan Kalish

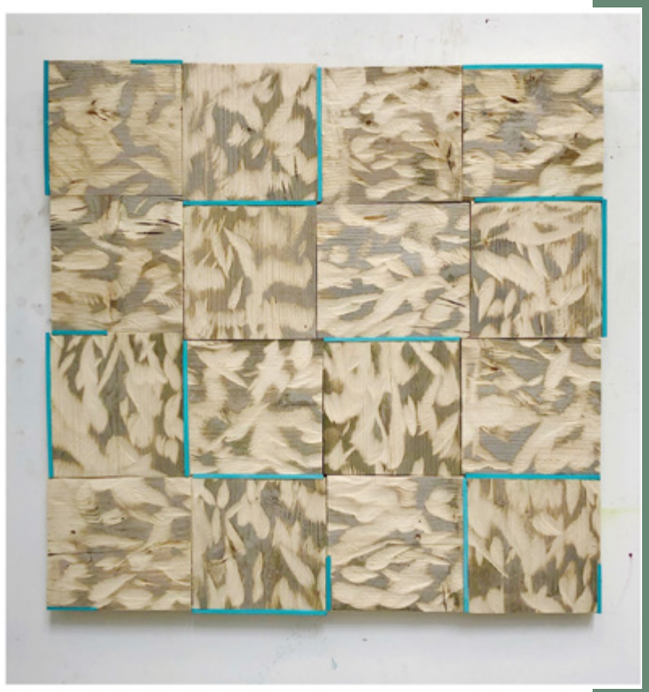
I became so involved in science and food research that I ended up meeting people who took me to study abroad, something I had never considered at the time. I ended up doing my Master's degree in Spain where life far from my friends and family became a burden. In solitude I noticed how much I used to run from myself, my feelings and my anger. I became so frustrated with life that I ended up isolated from the people I met in Spain. That was until one day when a person called Belinda changed the route of my life by inviting me to a Christian church. Of course, I rejected the invitation the first few times. What does the church have to do with me? How is Jesus going to help me? Isn't he dead? Belinda didn't give up and the third time she came with an invitation I could not reject. "Come to the church on Sunday, your friend Lea (as I am calling her in this story) is coming too because we are having a party with pizza." I frowned in surprise hearing that my Buddhist friend had accepted the invitation, but my first question was: "Is it free?" Belinda answered: "Yes" ... and that's how I stepped into a Christian church for the first time in my life. At the beginning it was a bit strange. People were acting as I had never seen before: peacefully. I started reading the Bible and it totally fitted with me, some parts I didn't understand but people in the church were keen to teach me. I also understood how Jesus is alive!

After years of studying the Bible and hours of praying, I understood that food science was one of my ways to glorify God, not myself: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). I don't know if in the future I'll own my own company or not but I reached the spiritual peace that nothing except Jesus can give, the one I didn't know I was looking for.

Diana Salgado is a Christian food engineer working on projects to reduce food waste in the UK.

TOO SMALL A WORLD

Dennae Pierre



Gentle Whisper, Anthony Vasquez

Dennae Pierre is the Executive Director of Surge Network in Phoenix, Arizona as well as one of the Co-Directors for The Crete Collective and City to City North America. You can find her book at www.restorativeleaders.com

Our world is too small

Economic crisis, violence, mass death
our minds struggle to show concern
when the stories come from outside
the walls of our own nation

We are sojourners in this place
No allegiance can be pledged
Jesus' kingdom is our only home

We analyze, debate
Make plans and ideate
Unaware of the ways our action
Impact the lands of our neighbors
What responsibility do we have
to the poor and suffering of the world?

That question is not simply directed to the nation
But it is a question to God's people
That reside and have been given power in this land

Our brothers and sisters flee
From violence
With sore feet
And displaced families
They migrate
Leaving behind war,
Loved ones,
Aromas, foods
Language, and lands
We too are aliens, foreigners
We should not be fluent
In the language of our present nation
Our first language should be that of heaven
Which recognizes the sounds of the world's hell
Translating a welcome
To migrating and suffering souls

It is not strangers who arrive at our city gates
And border walls
But often it is
Fellow citizens of heaven
Or it is those, who have not yet heard
The good news of God
And come asking for our help

Our world is too small
If what we are most concerned about
Lives within the boundaries
Of this small nation

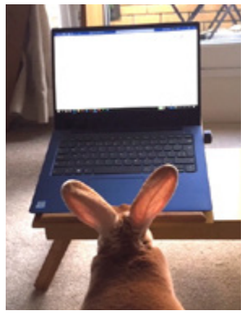
BEAU

THEOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RABBITS

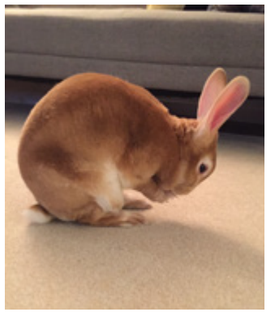
Anna Abram

Rabbits are different companions than other animals. They are more independent than dogs or even cats. Through the course of their coexistence with humans, they gradually get close to us, play with us, feel relaxed and trust in our presence. I live with an Orange Rex called Beaufort, known as Beau.

Beau was destined to live in Beaufort Castle, a uniquely designed two-storey hutch with a fox-proof pen in the garden of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge. He ended up with me in a one-bedroom flat without a garden. He has a carpet as his meadow, books instead of twigs to chew on (biblical commentaries are amongst his favourite, despite not being easy to digest) and curtains to practise his tailoring skills.



He seems to be a contented bunny with the same key characteristics that his fellow species display in the wild. He has many qualities. Three of them have a special significance to me: adaptability, alertness and routineness. Beau adapted exceptionally well to his new environment. He recently got promoted to the position of my research assistant, given his interest in books and the laptop. He is a master of alertness. Any change in the flat, a new sound, voice or visitor makes him vigilant and attentive. He seems to flourish thanks to a balanced routine of sleeping, relaxing, eating and playing. I could set my clock according to these activities. Their rhythm is almost identical each day, including his tranquil "participation" in my prayer time.



Beau has been helping me to appreciate the simple rhythm of life. "How we spend our days is how we spend our lives," says Annie Dillard in her book *Writing Life*. "What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing." I want to add: what we are doing this hour is also "doing us." When I look at Beau, especially when he is resting or cleaning himself (rabbits have the cutest way of cleaning their ears and nose, almost as if in a prayer pose), I see a creature who is totally present to himself while being in the presence of the other. His deep and shiny black eyes and his twitching nose have countless ways of communicating with me and telling me that he simply is.

Thanks to Beau I am rethinking what Real Presence means, sacramentally, emotionally, practically and educationally. Busyness and not having time to be properly present can be a mask. In the era of mask wearing, Beau is helping me to unmask some important issues that carry theological and spiritual significance. Animals are a mystery to us. They are more in tune with us than we would ever be able to understand. It is not surprising that rabbits feature in one of the earliest representations of the Holy Trinity. There are two artworks with rabbits that I like most: an icon of St Melangell, the 6th-century Welsh Saint and the 15th-century Rabbit Roundel in the church of Holy Trinity, Long Melford, Suffolk. These works as well as Beau help me to go beyond myself and touch the sacred.

Dr Anna Abram is Co-Principal of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge, UK. Her academic field is Christian ethics.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

AND THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF SPORTS

PJ Buys

On July 23, the strongest, fastest, toughest, fittest and best athletes from around the world will gather in Tokyo to compete in the XXXII Summer Olympic Games.

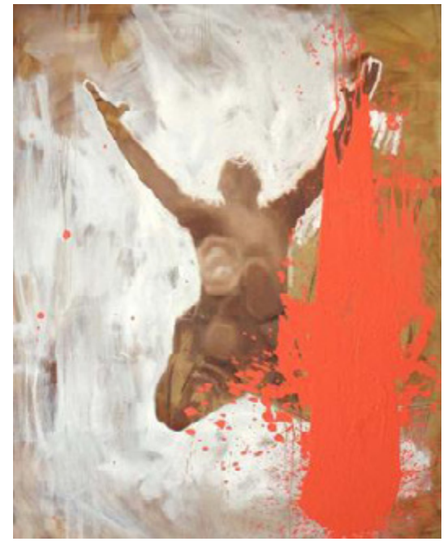
The world will soon witness outstanding moments of athletic grace, tears of joy and sorrow, wild, passionate and fey cries that border on derangement from the crowd, feats of extreme courage, daring, bravery, exhaustion, composure, athleticism, skill, determination, and the shedding and giving of blood in pursuit of victory.

Citius, Altius, Fortius!
"Faster, Higher, Stronger!"

So wrote the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertine, in the late 19th century as the official motto of the resurrected ancient Olympic Games.

But, as we watch these athletes push their bodies to the absolute limits of physical excellence and pain, as we watch player, coach and country passionately scream encouragement (or threat) from the sidelines till their faces burn red and as we watch athletes give their very heart, soul, body and mind in pursuit of victory, have you ever asked this question:

Why?
Why are these athletes competing?



Passion, Janna Prinsloo

Why are they sacrificing so much? Why are they doing this? Why are they breaking bones, training seven hours a day for four years, ripping muscle, flesh and sinew in the gym, and giving their entire being in pursuit of the Games?

The modern ethnologist claims humans play sports as a form of exercise to propagate the human species, while the Marxian believes that sports, like religion, operate as an opiate of the people, a facade of entertainment initiated by the bourgeoisie to profit from and quell the ignorant proletariat to their own subjugation to their labour.

There is some value to both the Marxian and ethnological theory of sport, but, in total, both theories of sport from these viewpoints are wrong. No athlete ever wept in the shame of defeat after a championship loss due to an "inefficient amount of exercise," and, although money is at the heart of sports, many athletes throughout time have competed in the Olympic Games for no money at all.

The reason for sports, the reason why we compete and play, is much, much deeper and more powerful than just exercise, or money. The answer to this question is epic on a biblical proportion, for the Word of God quite amazingly speaks a lot about the reality of sports. The function and power of sports is thoroughly spiritual, and recognizable only to those who "have eyes to see, and ears to hear."

“Behold, I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the earth!” wrote David in Psalm 78 with reference to Christ, the Messiah and Saviour of the world, who, in his coming, would showcase and reveal knowledge that has been hidden from the sight and minds of man. Let us now,

Infinity 6, Janna Prinsloo

in brief, shed some light on the true function and power of sports in the modern world. To do so, let me first direct our reader to the origins of the Olympic Games: Ancient Greece.

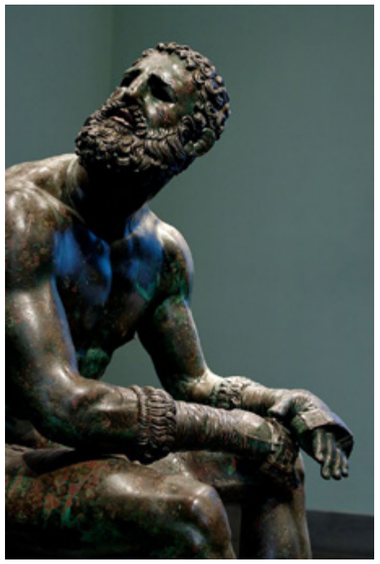
Ancient Greek athletes and citizens lived life with a different philosophical mindset than the modern world. While the modern (Western) code could roughly be characterized as the individual creating their own meaning and purpose in life apart from external pressure/force, the ancients lived life in pursuit of a different question. The question that guided the purpose of life for the ancients was the following:

“How do you overcome death?”

The reality, mystery and confusion of death permeated the ancient mind, including its nature, and, more powerfully than that, how one could overcome the reality of death and live beyond it. In the presence of the shadows and sepulchres of death, the function and purpose of sports was invented.

Sporting events in Ancient Mesopotamia, like the Olympics, were religious rituals that functioned structurally and symbolically as a worship of spiritual energy that was contained within nature. Rituals were events where societies would go to escape the Order and Routine of life in the celebration of Chaos, a spiritual source of energy both metaphysically experienced but also symbolically displayed. Sporting rituals, and festivals where these rituals occurred, like the Olympics, represented mankind’s need for anti-structure and chaos to escape boredom and replenish energy. In fact, the English word sport derives from the archaic English “disport,” which itself comes from the Old French “desporte,” which meant recreation, amusement or pastime. But the French word came from the Latin “des” meaning “down or away” and “porte” which means “to carry.” Therefore, the basic reference to sport is “to carry down from the serious.”

You see, more than anything, more than the fighting, the games, the entertainment, the purpose of a sporting ritual was about something more. The essence of a ritual, a term associated with premodern/primitive thought, is, as Owen Barfield said, that “there stands behind natural phenomena, and on the other side of me, a spirit that is of the same nature as me.” The purpose of the ritual was for the individual to experience losing himself into the collective, and becoming in tune with, or unified with a particular spirit that was “carried down” symbolically and spiritually from nature. This spiritual power was “brought down from above”



in and through the sporting ritual, and it had the power to uplift the crowd, vitalize them together in collective oneness, cause the brain neurons to fire and the heart to start pounding. This spiritual power was the reason why the athletes competed, giving their bones, heart, flesh, and quite often, their very lives, often dying in the ancient events in pursuit of this spirit.

For the spirit of the ritual of sport was the way one could overcome death. Through the spirit of the ritual, one could attain eternal life and thus live forever.

What then is this spirit? What is the basis, foundation and spiritual root of sports that gives sports so much power, influence and control over billions of people across this world?

The answer is glory.
As the Greek poets wrote:
“So long as they speak your name, ye shall never die.”

Glory was a concept that captured the heart and imagination of every Greek soldier, athlete, or general citizen, for life was “agathos,” a perpetual striving and battle against existence itself. However, through the conquest of victory, an athlete, and those of his family and clan who supported him/her, could obtain eternal life by the writing down of his name where he would be remembered throughout the annals of time by living in the perpetual memory of humanity. For this reason, the epic hero and champion Achilles in *The Iliad* is the ultimate symbol of glory. Offered the choice between a life of high social status and wealth, Achilles, the greatest warrior of all time, chooses to fight in the Battle of Troy, seeking death.

“My renown shall be imperishable and long will my life endure, for the doom of death will not come upon me.”

Achilles chose to forgo the momentary peace of life in pursuit of the kleon pantheon; an act of bravery so noble, brave and epic that the poets and gods would speak of it forever.

And, what was the final act that would totemize and make an athlete’s glory sacred?
It was sacrifice.

For, the ancient rituals of glory were made final by the act of sacrifice, where the winning athletes would perform the sacrifice of the bull over the altar on one of the seventy-two altars before the great gold and ivory statue of Zeus (one of the seven ancient wonders of the world). The athlete would capture the blood of the animal (thus symbolically being imbued with the spirit of glory by the shedding of blood) into a cup or a bowl, where the cup, now totemized and made sacred by blood, would be a symbol of the athlete being remembered throughout time by the writing down and remembering of one’s name. In fact, for this reason modern trophies in hockey, tennis, soccer and more, remain cups, bowls and plates compared to say, sabres, armour, wheels or other objects of conventional value. Bowls and cups are historical symbols of ancient glory, but just forgotten and lost in the modernization of a secular, spiritless age.

In fact, the athletes would run with torches in their hands, throw the discus and javelin towards the altars and wrestle and box before the altar of glory, all in the hopes that, if victorious, they too would participate in the spirit of glory which would imbue their lives with the meaning found in the eternal life of glory.

The upcoming Tokyo Olympics are celebrations of spiritual energy and the pursuit of glory through victory; a form of glory that gives the athlete eternal life.

However, the Bible always was aware of the power of man-made rituals, and man-made attempts at eternal life. The word that the Bible substitutes for glory is another ancient word; an unknown and often forgotten concept that exists as powerfully today as it did in the ancient world; that word is *idolatry*.

PJ Buys is a former professional ice hockey player with a Master’s degree in Philosophy who now works as a competitive hockey coach in Ontario.

MEET THE ARTISTS

HEIDI SALZWEDEL

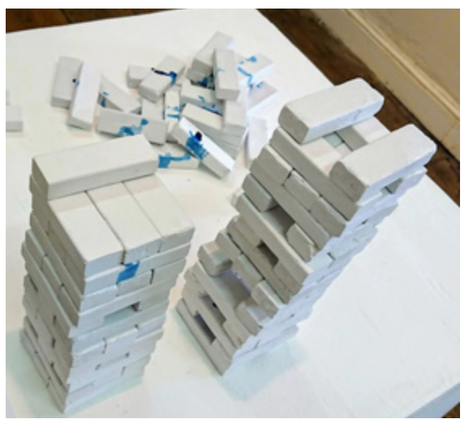
Based in Cape Town, Heidi Salzwedel is a practising artist and an art and design educator. She obtained a Fine Arts degree through Rhodes University, Makhanda (2009) and her MA degree through Stellenbosch University (2015). Her time is spent juggling a number of passions: art, teaching, writing, research and developing community. Currently she, along with others, is connecting artists in Cape Town as part of KRUX. She has exhibited internationally and locally with 40 Stones, a faith-based visual arts collective/network.

Delft II depicts a prominent building in Delft, South Africa.

Delft I depicts a high-rise building in Delft, Netherlands.

Inspired by a dream while in the Netherlands on an art residency, these artworks by Heidi deal with place, history and spirituality through the lens of two towns that share the same name: the tourist town of Delft in Holland and the notoriously dangerous Delft in the Western Cape, South Africa.

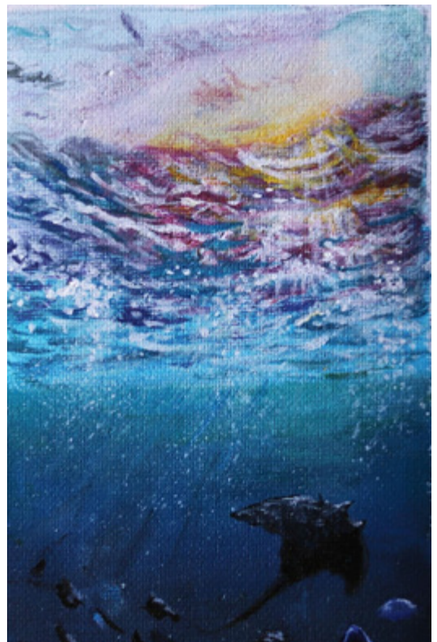
Delve/Delft is a body of work/exhibition which shows place; while they appear on the surface to stand on opposite ends of a spectrum socially, politically and geographically, Heidi uses the metaphor of water to ask questions about the imminent proximity of spiritual fulfillment in both. To see the full exhibition, visit the exhibition online HERE.



We All Fall Down. White cement.

We All Fall Down is reminiscent of the game of Jenga, involving the imminent process of playing until the structure falls down. The interactive cement Jenga sets at the centre of the exhibition reflect the water level rising within the buildings depicted in other artworks: *Delft I and II*. The imminent rise of water (spiritual fulfillment) within a man-made structure causes these structures and paradigms to fall.

MELUSI DLAMINI



Into the Ocean – Part I. 11,8 x 19cm. Acrylic on canvas sheet. (2020)

Into the Ocean – Part II. 11,8 x 19cm. Acrylic on canvas sheet. (2020)

Melusi Dlamini's painting journey began in 2014 when he enrolled in a specialised art college, Pro Arte Alphen Park. This is where he was introduced to painting for the first time. Initially he admittedly struggled with the medium, and was convinced that he wouldn't move forward. He was ready to give up and it was at this point that his art teacher redirected his focus. She made him aware that he had the gift but that it just needed more time. Getting a few steps closer to mastering the craft would involve time and commitment. He decided to listen to her and stay; to give it more time. He gave the craft more focused attention and this resulted in instant progress every week. His works later went on to feature in local community gatherings and the State Theatre in Pretoria. In 2019 he enrolled in the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. He is currently majoring in painting and is in his third year of study.

"The subject matter of my paintings is predominantly landscapes and seascapes. This inspiration comes from an ongoing obsession with light and how it reflects on outdoor surfaces. Deep down at its core, my studio practice is about bringing into awareness the magnificent creative work of God. Outdoor tones and refracted light have a lot of scriptural symbolism; they all point to God, the creative genius behind it all. My art aims to be an expression of exactly that – God's created world. Jesus often used metaphors that the world would understand in the form of parables, to tell a story with a heavenly meaning. I hope my paintings serve as a form of visual parable, which may make people wonder, and remember His heavenly meanings too."

GUEST ARTIST INTERVIEW

PETER SLOWIK, PROFESSIONAL VIOLIST AND FOUNDER OF CREDO CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mary Vanhoozer

MV: Describe the path that led you to establish CREDO, and the key moments that clarified this direction.

PS: By the time I was 40, I had read the biographies of many legendary musicians (Casals, Kreisler, etc) and had worked with many of the world's most famous musicians – YoYo Ma, Aaron Copland, Ella Fitzgerald, Julie Andrews, Itzhak Perlman.... I discovered that the artists I respected the most also were people who radiated goodwill and love. Although I had worked for many years in leading school and summer programmes, none of them had codified a way to lead people to personal growth – their whole curriculum was concentrated on artistic/professional growth.

I hypothesized that we needed to balance the self-centered qualities of typical conservatory training with *other*-centeredness. This resulted in the formation of Credo – a time and place set apart from normal studies where we could combine the highest level of classical music training with Christian faith (following the servant-leadership model of Jesus!) and intentionally serving others with our art and being. We had no idea whether this novel idea would work, but the first year we were blessed with brilliant faculty and 45 intrepid students. 22 years later we have nearly two thousand alumni who are often significant musical leaders themselves.

In the years since Credo's inception, there have been many opportunities for self-reflection. Credo has excellent faculty, wonderful facilities (at Oberlin Conservatory), a well-designed curriculum and talented students. What sets Credo apart from every other music festival is the way that high artistic standards are applied in an atmosphere of cherishing the individual. By welcoming and celebrating each student as a child of God, Credo creates a "Mr. Rogers" type atmosphere where everyone is free to maximize their personal and musical growth.

MV: How would you say CREDO is different from other chamber music festivals?

PS: Many music festivals put the performers first, or perhaps they put legendary composers and their works first. If Credo is doing our job correctly, we are putting God first. The joy that comes out of celebrating all of His gifts should be evident in the intensity with which we pursue excellence, but also in the emotional transparency of our performances. Upon hearing Credo students playing an orchestral concert in Cleveland's famous Severance Hall, the reviewer remarked at the joy and exuberance of the students' performance. He (mistakenly) attributed it to them hearing their sound in that beautiful space – but it was actually the joy of performing music with people that shared a special love and connection. At Credo the result is important – and hopefully impressive.... but we're really about the process.

MV: One of the ways CREDO is unique is the service projects – opportunities for campers to serve the community with their musical gifts, as well as sometimes just by the ministry of presence and service. Can you explain the significance of that service element? Is there a connection between practising music and service?

PS: Matthew 23:12 tells us that "whoever humbles himself will be exalted" and Matthew 25:40 tells us that "whatever you did for the least of these brothers, you did for Me." Being a high-level classical musician requires many hours in a practice room – separated from people. It can also mean fancy concert dress, expensive instruments, and sitting up on a stage (again, separated from people!) looking for applause and adulation. By taking one day a week serving others young musicians connect with real people. By doing physical service projects (cleaning shelters for the homeless, helping at food banks) we celebrate our common humanity – we all need shelter and food, and any one of us can work to provide that for others. When we play concerts, we get to appreciate that we have a special tool into people's hearts, to provide inspiration, beauty, challenge and peace. The famous violin teacher Leopold Auer said the aim of every great artist is "to understand and be understood." Great musicians understand the music they play, but they also have deep empathy for their fellow man.

The Banjo Lesson, Henry Ossawa Tanner

MV: You have been present for most CREDO student concerts, and you have witnessed the reception of those concerts first-hand. Can you describe some of the most memorable or significant audience responses to student performances?

PS: I have indeed witnessed hundreds of CREDO concerts over the years. Our students welcome each day by singing hymns together in a gothic chapel – in beautiful multiple-part harmony. (That's a beautiful sound I wish I could share with you!) Their playing has boomed throughout stadiums of 40,000 (playing the National Anthem), they have played quiet concerts for intimate gatherings of critically ill people. They have triumphed in Orchestra Hall, Chicago, and Severance Hall, Cleveland, and they have played on inner city street corners and public parks.

The most memorable reactions have come from music reaching people in an hour of need – like families at a hospice centre, or people with limited access to classical music. One prison inmate said he appreciated our gift of love to him – we did not know him or what he had done, but we gave him the love-gift of music anyway. But the most memorable responses I've seen have been in nursing homes, where music can completely energize and focus people who come to the concert completely disengaged from sensory input. Music knocks down all barriers!

My favourite moments have come in our large orchestral concerts – after moving the audience with inspiring symphonic performances, the students of Credo sing "The Lord Bless You and Keep You." In the early years it was just a benediction gift from the students to the audience. But in recent years we've asked the audience to join in, too. What a spectacular way to seal the shared emotional journey of a concert – with mutual celebration and blessing of 500 or more people, joined for a special hour or two of their lives!

MV: CREDO is a place where young musicians not only receive lessons, but are mentored by some of the best craftsmen in their field. What does it mean for students to learn from the CREDO faculty? What does it mean for the CREDO faculty to work with these young men and women?

PS: Credo faculty are leaders in the music profession – department chairs at Juilliard, Oberlin and the like, players in major symphony orchestras. They come back to Credo year after year because of the special bond they develop with students at Credo. Faculty welcome students with unconditional love. Both the most talented and least advanced students are appropriately challenged and nurtured – which is freeing and inspiring to faculty and students alike. Credo's format contains several aspects that foster deeper communication between faculty and students:

1) Daily coaching – students meet with the same faculty mentors 5 days a week.
2) Each day at Credo begins with a faculty member presenting a homily to the community (students and faculty). Beginning each day with God's word amplified and explained fosters an atmosphere that leads to informal faith discussions throughout the festival.
3) Credo faculty members cherish the "fireside chats" where they share their life journeys (musical and spiritual) with the students. In doing so, the faculty members become vulnerable and relatable to the students.

The close mentoring that begins at Credo often extends many years into the future – as Credo alumni turn to favourite faculty members at crucial crossroads in their lives.

MV: Some of our readers may not be familiar with classical music. Why do you believe classical music is important to play and perform live? Why might listening to live music making be just as important as playing it?

PS: The popular singer Bobby McFerrin talks about music

being a big house with many rooms. He points out that "you don't want to spend your whole time in one room." Some of our music is good for getting things done (the basement, kitchen or workshop), some of it is good for relaxing (the family room or patio). Classical music is a more formal place set aside for lofty ideals. It's nice to put on good clothes to go out to dinner or to church. It's nice to decorate a holiday table with special plates and linens. It's good for our souls to "dress up" and approach classical music on a regular basis.

The Violinist, Marc Chagall

Classical music operates on longer time spans than most popular music. While a pop song might be 5 minutes, a classical composition might have 4 movements, each lasting 10 minutes or more. Popular music rolls easily in 4-bar phrases – many classical compositions set up complex harmonic problems that unfold over many minutes.

The emotional gamut of classical music is extreme – from brutal to sublime, from whimsical to profound. The purpose of all art is to exercise our emotions – and by going to a classical concert one can experience an extremely wide variety of instrumentation, rhythmic pulses and emotions.

In some sense classical music is a bit like a good Bible study – to get the most out of it, we have to slow down and tune out the noise of the world, and enter a new world created by the composer.

During the recent pandemic, I've still been doing my job of listening to music many hours a day, teaching people. But I was separated from the opportunity to hear live, in-person music in a concert setting. The first few postpandemic performances I attended practically brought me to tears – the experience of musical communication across space was that remarkable and beautiful! I would love for each person to have the opportunity to hear a great madrigal group, a thundering symphony or an intimate string quartet in a concert setting. How might that change the world?

MV: While CREDO offers individual lessons and masterclass opportunities to students, it is primarily a chamber music camp. Is there something unique or particular about chamber music that lends itself well to CREDO's vision? What chamber music repertoire would you recommend to someone who is new to the genre?

PS: I chose the format of chamber music as the primary mode of instruction at Credo because it's the most effective way for students to learn in the summer. They develop their playing and artistry by incorporating the best aspects of their partners' playing. Quartets are self-directing: that is, each member has a responsibility and opportunity to be a musical leader. For some of these same reasons, chamber music is an ideal format for mentorship – the faculty coach has an intimate group setting to develop trust and to challenge students to greater personal discovery.

It's unfair to ask for a short list of great chamber music works! But here goes:

First movement of Haydn "Sunrise" Quartet. This is a miraculous piece with beautiful – almost romantic! – melodies set in a classical shell.

Last movement of Beethoven Op. 59 No. 3. A very exciting fugue with a brilliantly-long subject!

Last movement of Mendelssohn C minor Piano Trio. From an intimate beginning to a thundering finale – inspiring!

First movement of Ravel Quartet. French impressionist music at its best.

MV: CREDO recently celebrated its 20th-year anniversary – when you think about CREDO's 50th anniversary, how do you envision its impact and place in society, nationally and internationally?

PS: I foresee a network of local hubs each representing excellence. These hubs will be guided by inspiring artist-teacher-philosophers, and artists all along the chain from beginner to accomplished professional will share the joy of making music together and sharing it with their community. In their music and actions, these musicians will win people to follow Christ by "showing them a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

The "Credo-future" dream is that every family who values faith, music and service can know about Credo and benefit from its opportunities for musical and personal mentorship.

The Concert of the Angels (detail), Gaudenzio Ferrari

MV: Would you say that CREDO is just for those training to become professional musicians? What would you want CREDO to offer to those who plan to remain amateur musicians?

PS: Many studies have shown that musical training is helpful to all kinds of brain development. Playing an instrument at a high level requires the determination and training of an athlete, the probing mind of a philosopher, the vision of an artist, and the resource management of an economist. Mastering your instrument (playing your part well) while being sensitive to your fellow quartet members approximates the challenges we will face in our families and businesses. Independent excellence as a team player – that's what many companies are looking for! We learn all those skills in chamber music. Combining those skills with a biblical foundation to put other people first results in exceptional leadership training.

MV: CREDO is a unique music festival with a very special vision for music making. What can music lovers do to help support classical music and, more specifically, how can we help support CREDO and its mission?

PS: Credo is at an exciting point in our history. Sadly, the pandemic deprived us of the opportunity to be incarnate for the Festival for two summers. But we have continued to grow the ministry through the development of a network of local hubs. (This network is called Credo Club.) There are numerous ways and levels to be involved with Credo. The best part is that you don't have to be musical yourself to share in the joy of Credo!

You can:

Tell others (especially music lovers and talented musicians) about Credo.

Come to concerts.

Volunteer to help expand Credo's reach – including in your town!

Provide financial support for scholarships so Credo can reach everyone.

Pray for the ministry's continued focus and excellence as we expand.

One of the greatest stewardship sermons I ever heard was titled "Give until it feels good!" We welcome you contacting our office and talking with us about your passions and your gifts! We will surely find a place for your energy and heart – and you will feel great about sharing Jesus' love and God's amazing gift of music with others!

AUDIO/VIDEO LINKS

CREDO Chamber Music Festival: Mendelssohn String Octet Op. 20

Credo Mission Trips

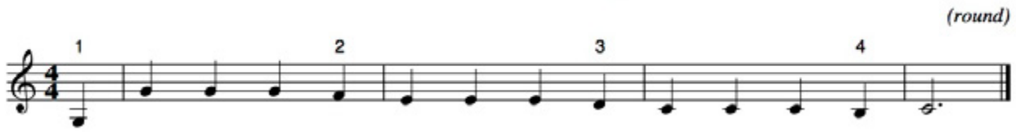
Symphony Center and Severance Hall: Credo Brandenburg Concerti 2015

Mary Vanhoozer is a multi-instrumentalist and melodist, who aims to restore beauty one note at a time, and to help listeners cultivate the virtue of sustained listening.

THE SINGING SPOT

There is an old Chinese proverb: “A bird does not sing because it has an answer: it sings because it has a song.” In this section, we invite our readers to infuse their daily lives with a new song, specifically: a round. A round is a wonderful way of harmonizing with other singers without learning a separate melody line, or knowing much about music theory and improvisation. Rounds may be simple but they can also be extremely complex. For this second issue, we will continue with something simple enough that, when sung as a round with other singers, nevertheless is very satisfying to sing.

FOR HEALTH AND STRENGTH



I grew up singing this with family around the dinner table to thank God for his countless blessings. Now my husband and I (and occasionally our miniature schnauzer!) carry on the tradition in our home.

This round is a four-person round, but also sounds lovely with only two or three voices. Each new person begins their first note when the person in front of them sings the last note in the first measure (entrances also indicated by the numbers).

The Singing Spot:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMNjri8vPhI

Artwork by Barbara A Lane

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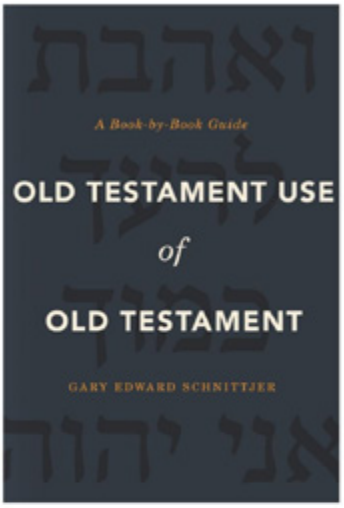

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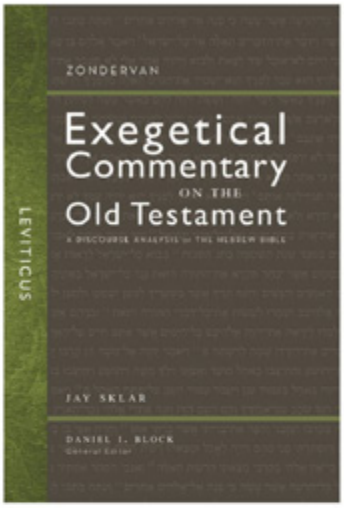

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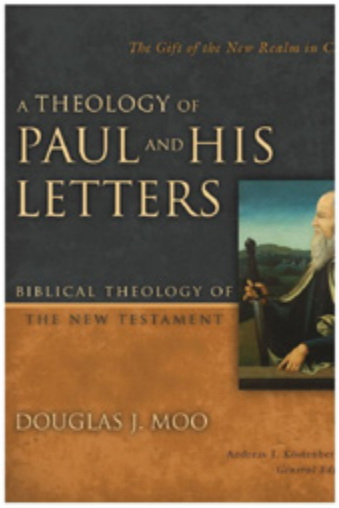

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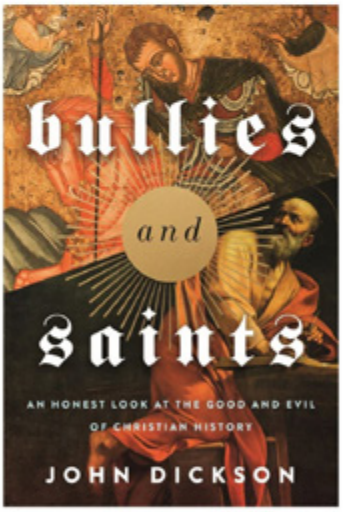

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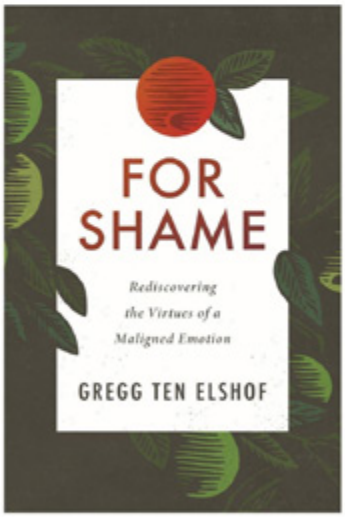

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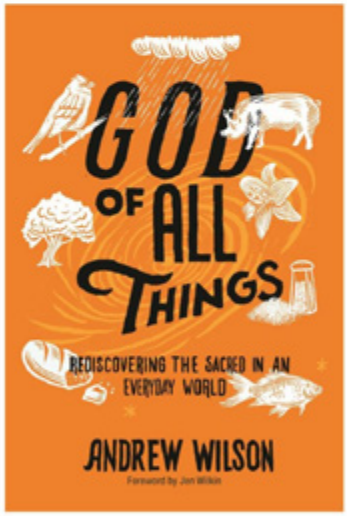

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