THE BIG PICTURE

CHRIST PLAYS IN TEN THOUSAND PLACES

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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?*

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COVER ARTWORK

Exterior Panel #3 of *A Creature Chronicle. Consider Creation: Faith and Fable. Fact and FIction.* Mixed-media installation by Betty Spackman. Betty Spackman, MFA, is a Canadian installation artist and painter, author and educator.

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THE RICHNESS OF REALITY AND ART

EDITORIAL

MARLEEN HENGELAAR-ROOKMAAKER

Peter S. Smith, *Black Tea for HRR*

Hans Rookmaaker, my father, was born 100 years ago. To this we owe this issue of *The Big Picture* devoting a good number of articles to his integrated Christian approach to art history. It needs no explanation that I am very grateful for these insightful essays written by his pupils and friends. I hope they may take away some of the sad misunderstandings about my father's work that have arisen over the last decades. These have come about not only because my father did his work in the 1950s to 1970s, a very different time and era than our present culture, but especially because these authors failed to comprehend the importance of the neo-Calvinist tradition as the foundation of my father's ideas. What better place to have these articles published than *The Big Picture*, as it is dedicated to the same.

Let me give an example. My father was an art historian, not a theologian. To call him a theologian is a telling mistake. It fits in with the recent rise of the discipline of theology and the arts. Within the Christian world it is nowadays theologians who discuss art, in my father's time it was art historians and scholars of aesthetics. For evangelical believers theologians have made art a safe area to apply oneself to, they have, as it were, sanctified it. But my father did not need such a lion tamer, as he was rooted in a tradition that saw art and all areas of life as important in themselves as good gifts of the Creator.

Hence my father took a fundamentally positive stance towards art and culture, not a hostile one which builds a wall between Christian folk and the evil world. To reduce his ideas about modern art to hostility to culture is to make him a product of pietism, which was totally alien to him. When my father was critical of modern art – modern art being a term he used only for the dominant nihilistic subculture within twentieth-century art, as Peter Smith elucidates – his criticism sprang from a critique of Western modern culture and its severe reductionism and loss of reality and humanity. His assessments were rooted in the philosophical ideas of neo-Calvinism which were introduced by Abraham Kuyper (see my article) and elaborated by Herman Dooyeweerd. To my father modern art posed not a threat to pious Christian lives, but rather made clear how Enlightenment ideas had affected and impoverished modern life. And this he lamented, while also urging believers to go and see modern art and take it seriously. Artists, Christian or not, he encouraged to make contemporary art that once again would regain the richness of reality.

Much more can and should be said. I am glad I can refer you to the articles by William Edgar, Nigel Halliday, Peter S. Smith and Rodolfo Amorim, each of them discussing different aspects of my father's work. Rodolfo tells the remarkable story of how and why my father became a voice that speaks to evangelicals in Brazil.

As usual this present issue covers a variety of topics. Besides even more articles about artists and the arts, its subjects range as wide as politics and sports. May they serve as a source of inspiration and illumination.

Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker is chief editor of ArtWay (www.artway.eu), a website about the visual arts and faith. She edited the *Complete Works* of her father, Hans Rookmaaker; has contributed to many books and has written articles about classical and popular music, liturgy, and the visual arts.

5 REASONS TO READ ROOKMAAKER TODAY

DR WILLIAM EDGAR
Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia and *Professeur Associé* at the Faculté Jean Calvin, Aix-en-Provence

Hans Rookmaaker left us prematurely at the age of 55. It would seem he had so much more to give. Nevertheless, his legacy is solid, and many have carried on the burden of his thoughts. His devoted daughter, my friend Marleen, has accomplished the Herculean task, a labour of love, of editing and publishing his complete works.[1] They are astonishingly rich and diverse.[2] Covenant College has established a Rookmaaker Scholarship in Jazz Studies. The Dutch L'Abri at Eck en Wiel is as lively as it was when Dr and Mrs Rookmaaker founded it in 1971.

Rookmaaker's vision has not been without some criticism even from his former students.[3] It is a badge of honour rather than a defeat. Professor Rookmaaker was a mentor and a friend. We spent many hours together which were formative for me as a young Christian. I am a jazz musician and his views opened my eyes to the connection between jazz and the gospel.

My assignment is to present *5 Reasons to Read Rookmaaker Today*. This is not an easy task. There could be 25! But here is my best shot.

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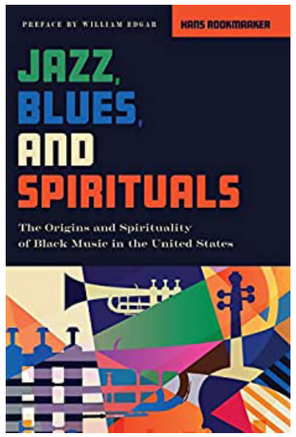
1. Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, ed., *The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker* (6 vols.; Carlisle: Piquant, 2021).
2. Most of us were prepared for his best-known texts, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture; Jazz, Blues and Spirituals; The Creative Gift* and the like. But we might not have been expecting "Our Calling in a Postchristian world" or "Ultranaturalism" (vol. 6: 163, 252) and scores of other essays.
3. See, for example, Jonathan Anderson & William Dyrness, *Modern Art and the Life of a Culture* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2016).

1. "HE TAUGHT ME TO KNOW WHAT I WAS SEEING. HE TAUGHT ME TO LOOK."

This is what the children said about their Papa Rookmaaker.[4] And it is true for countless numbers of his followers. Rookmaaker took scores of students through museums, standing in front of paintings, sometimes for hours, guiding their eyes to see things they would not pick up right away. In his best-selling book, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, he shows the viewer how to "read" a painting from left to right. In one memorable example, he argues that Rembrandt has solved the problem of being realistic yet carrying a proper interpretation. For example, he makes the point that in Rembrandt's drawing of *Christ on the Emmaus Road*, the artist does not need a bright halo to underscore Christ's divinity but uses the rhythm of disciple-to-Christ-to-disciple-to-house, drawing the eye to Christ through the cadence of the drawing.[5]



I have many fond memories of travelling with Dr Rookmaaker. We went through New England, and I loved watching him wax enthusiastic about Colonial architecture. "Do you see how elegant and simple this Cape Codder is?" He loved the Tiffany windows in my parents-in-law's home. At the same time, I well remember his disdain for anything cheap. He hated *kitsch* and almost enjoyed disillusioning someone who fell for that kind of art. So many Christians he encountered were ill equipped to make judgments about paintings. If you made the mistake of saying the painting was good because it was lifelike, he would scorn you as a "naturalist." Or worse: "This is a photograph, not a painting." (He may have underestimated the artistic choices photographers make!)

One anecdote, related by Linette Martin, is revealing. While standing, it seemed for hours, in front of a painting, Rookmaaker kept asking probing questions: What do you see? "It's a crucifixion." Yes that's obvious, but what else is there? "The colours indicate meaning." Yes but is there

Charles Demuth, *The Jazz Singer*

more? After a pause, Rookmaaker declares, "Well no, there is no more: this is a 'silly' painting. I just wanted you to see that. ..."[6]

2. HE SAW LINKS BETWEEN VARIOUS KINDS OF MUSIC AND A WORLDVIEW

Most important for me as a musician, he connected jazz and blues to the Christian message. His great book on the subject, *Jazz, Blues and Spirituals*, was originally published in Dutch in 1959. It was later translated into English.[7] Recently P & R Publishing wisely reissued this classic.[8] In addition, Rookmaaker wrote scores of articles on the subject.

4. Linette Martin, *Hans Rookmaaker: A Biography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979), 113.
5. H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (London: IVP, 1970), 16–17.
6. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art*, 132–133.
7. See Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, ed., *The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker*, vol. 2 (Carlisle: Piquant, 2003), 157–316.
8. H. R. Rookmaaker, *Jazz, Blues and Spirituals: The Origins and Spirituality of Black Music in the United States* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020).

HRR and Mahalia Jackson

This was not a purely intellectual matter for Dr Rookmaaker. He loved the music. As a young man he spent all his spare money on jazz records. His wife, Anky, once told me the music was on all day in their home. He focused on New Orleans music from the 1920s. He believed that subsequently jazz had become worldly and commercial. Worse, modern jazz had caved in to existentialist philosophy and lost its original African-American purity. While this historiography may be argued, what is clear is Rookmaaker's extraordinary knowledge of musicians and styles most Americans have no idea about. Not only Louis Armstrong and King Oliver, but Clarence Williams and Barbecue Bob are highlighted.

The music that for many on both sides of the Atlantic was considered carnal and even immoral, he defended as profoundly Christian. One of his most moving comparisons is between the music of King Oliver and Johann Sebastian Bach. Both are calm, confident, yet melodic. The *basso continuo* is parallel to the rhythm section; the inner voices serve the same functions.[9]

One of my prized possessions is a number of his record jackets from the Fontana series with detailed liner notes on the featured players. He knew all about their lives and musical styles. I also have copies of his letters to American editors urging them to release records for Europeans. His meticulous devotion to promoting this art form is striking.

One of my favourite areas of Rookmaaker's interest is the spirituals. He loved black quartets, such as the Spirit of Memphis, whose simple but profound renderings of biblical truths are still inspirational 70 years after they were recorded. He loved Mahalia Jackson, whom he was able to meet in 1960. He loved her song, *I'm Going to Move on up a Little Higher* with its words about heaven, where "It will be always howdy, howdy, and never goodbye." It was played at his funeral.

9. Rookmaaker, *Jazz, Blues and Spirituals*, 213–214.

3. HE WAS A FRIEND AND A MENTOR TO MANY

He was certainly that to me. He wrote me many letters. He came to stay with us, and we talked into the wee hours. Particularly memorable was the music he used to send me when I led a jazz band. I have a cache of reel-to-reel tapes of wonderful music from New Orleans, with messages such as "you must try to sound like these."

Dr Rookmaaker was a friend and a mentor to scores of artists. Invariably he tried to encourage them to "be yourself" and not feel undue pressure to evangelize. By the title *Art Needs No Justification* he did not just mean there was a place for making art in the order of creation.[10] He meant one did not have to make legitimate his or her profession because it was a platform for evangelism. He was fiercely opposed to such a utilitarian view of vocation. His marvellous book, *The Creative Gift*, includes a "Letter to Miss Stephenson" telling her to pursue her work to God's glory without feeling undue pressure to convert people.[11]

Numerous artists considered themselves his sons or daughters. Many of them began with him at the Free University of Amsterdam (the VU). One of the most prominent is John Walford, who went on to teach art history at Wheaton College, in Illinois. His courses covered a wide range of subjects. He wrote a most useful introductory guide to painting, *Great Themes in Art*.[12] Following his teacher's inspiration and improving on

10. H. R. Rookmaaker, *Art Needs No Justification* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010).
11. See [https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1966/september-2/letter-to-christian-artist.html].
12. E. John Walford, *Great Themes in Art* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2002).

Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape With a Church*

it, Walford introduces students to what they need to see about paintings in order to plumb their depths. Walford is perhaps the world's specialist in the Dutch Golden Age landscape artist Jacob van Ruisdael.[13] This richly illustrated study reflects on the clear way van Ruisdael portrays the world through a biblical lens, including the glories of the scenes and the threatening darkness of its fallenness.

Peter Smith was another devotee of Rookmaaker. He is a wood engraver and a relief printmaker. Smith remembers his first visit to Birmingham College of Art in 1967. Smith recalls being ready to abandon the arts to go into "ministry" when Rookmaaker persuaded him to stay with it. Later, he remarked, "I now recognize the wisdom in Rookmaaker's approach. In a situation where he felt Christians had not engaged in the arts it was clear we were some way behind and that it would take time, if not generations, to catch up. Solution: get as many Christians engaged as possible. Out of that, by God's grace, something worthwhile might emerge."[14]

Several other notables became Rooky's friends and enthusiasts. Paul Clowney has testified of the influence of the master on his life. Importantly, William Dyrness came under his sway. His book on *Rouault: A Vision of Suffering and Salvation* is a masterpiece.[15] Last, but not least, Graham Birtwistle, who originally clashed with Rooky, ended up on the faculty of the VU. He is an expert on the COBRA movement and "primitivism" in art. The curator of drawings at the Getty Museum outside of Los Angeles came under Rooky's sway. And the list goes on.

4. GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY

It is hard to find a single theme that drove Rookmaaker through all his investigations. But if there were one it would have to be the meaning of history. And in particular it was about the perception of God's hand even though God "provides the only proper foundation for the life of a society."[16] I say then, perception, since many of Rookmaaker's concerns about history were focused on believing that God was at work despite certain appearances. In his sustained critique of the Enlightenment mentality, he warns against merely trusting our senses, according to natural reason. He argues that the biblical notion of truth must include acknowledging the work of God, which is not always directly visible.

One of the themes in his view of history is judgment and redemption. Over and over again, Rookmaaker explains that the trials and hardships of this world are not all caused directly by our foolish actions. They may be so, indirectly. But God proffers his judgments on the world not as a contradiction of his redemptive purposes, but in keeping with his loving designs.[17] Rookmaaker's articles are full of biblical references, particularly to the psalms and the prophets, though he devotes considerable space to the book of Revelation. It may come as a surprise to some to encounter such a rich familiarity with Scripture from someone whose profession was art historian. He saw the history of art as a reflection of the history of philosophy, which in turn was historically conditioned.

It is more than likely that many of Rookmaaker's concerns

13. E. John Walford, *Jacob van Ruisdael and the Perception of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
14. See Peter S. Smith, *The Way I See It* (Carlisle, UK: Piquant Press, 2009).
15. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).
16. "The Bible's Portrait of History," in Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, ed., *The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker*, vol. 6 (Carlisle: Piquant, 2003), 9.
17. His views are expressed throughout his writings. They are found in concentrated form in his *Complete Works*, vol. 6: 5–87.

emerged out of his experiences of imprisonment, and of the fate of the Jews during the *Shoah*. His love for the Jewish people came from several sources, not least of which was his affection for Riki, a young Jewish woman, whom he led into an understanding of the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments alike. She died at Auschwitz, one of the great sorrows of his life. His analysis of the role of God in history, and the faith of believers, is well worth reading today.

5. CURIOSITY ABOUT LIFE AND PEOPLE

This quality is one of the most difficult to write about, and yet is one of the most important, and indeed memorable, of Rookmaaker's virtues. There is irony here. Hans Rookmaaker was shy and reserved. He was not exactly gregarious. Yet he was fascinated by life and by people.

His curiosity about African American music was insatiable. It is true that he saw in this cultural production a critical contrast to the surrounding "bourgeois" society. Thus, there were philological justifications for the music he promoted. But this should not mask the fact that he just loved it and couldn't get enough of it. And that from someone who was reputed to be tone-deaf! If you were invited into his home for an evening you might have to listen to Jelly Roll Morton over and over again.

He spent countless hours perusing every style in the history of art. Every day he found ways to retreat into his office and pore over his books. He was a regular at all the important museums and knew the location of the different works better than the docents.

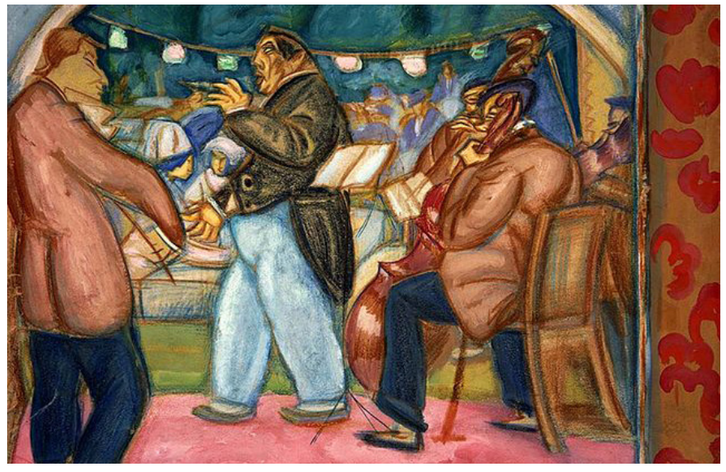
He travelled extensively and, in each place, met new and interesting people. He was fascinated by "all sorts and conditions of men" and women!! Nothing remotely suspicious, but many women found him to be a father figure and sought his counsel.

One of Rookmaaker's most provocative, yet helpful remarks was this: Jesus did not come to save people but to make them human. We know what he meant. When he died, one of his InterVarsity friends summed up his life and work: "It is wonderful how God can use someone so human."

Dr William Edgar is the author of numerous books, including *Created and Creating* (IVP Academic, 2016).

Individual volumes of *The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker*, published by Piquant (https://piquanteditions.com), are available through Amazon, in the USA and the UK.

The editors are grateful to Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker and Pieter and Elria Kwant for supplying the HRR photographs. They acknowledge, with thanks, permission to reproduce them from the following copyright holders: Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, Sylvester Jacobs and John Walford.



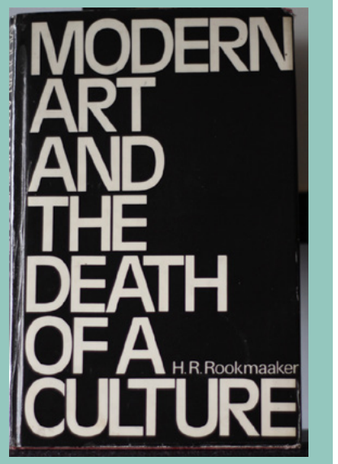
Boris Grigoriev, *Musicians*

MODERN ART

in *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*

PETER S. SMITH

The first Impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1874 faced severe critics, but much has happened in the intervening years to modify our view of their work. Standing in front of a Monet painting today, we can understand why those first critics were shocked, but we cannot easily share their emotion. Dr Hans Rookmaaker's book *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* was first published in 1970. If we are to make sense of it today, we need to contextualise it. It contains no reference to now familiar works made after 1969 and an artist's later works may modify our earlier opinions about them. The book was a 1970s' call to action, rather than an academic treatise.



If you use the term "modern art" to refer to all contemporary 20th-century art and read *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* in that light, you will find fault. Rookmaaker regarded modern art as one stream within contemporary 20th-century art. It was a kind of powerful subculture, supported by a group of artists, museum curators and art critics, who successfully presented modern art as THE art of the 20th century. He was not alone in suggesting this, but after his death in 1977 more writers began to agree that Modernism was such a subculture. By the 1980s this had become the prevailing opinion. In a 2018 *Sunday Times* review of *America's Cool Modernism*, art critic Waldemar Januszczak wondered why some 20th-century artists represented in the exhibition had been previously overlooked by that Modernist agenda.

How did Rookmaaker distinguish modern art from contemporary 20th-century art? In modern art he identified certain common concerns, while not suggesting all are present in any particular work. Often there was a nihilistic attitude, which regarded humanity as absurd and alienated from the world. There may be a view of creativity and spirituality which is fed by neo-Platonic or neo-Gnostic roots. In Rookmaaker's view, this devalues the created world, turning it into an alien place which obscures and hides "real" reality. There may be an interest in Eastern philosophies, theosophical movements, or a kind of secular mysticism. The older notion of "artist as prophet" still existed, but was modified to include the idea of artists as visionary figures with special insight to interpret their times. There was a desire for a revolutionary break with the past and its conventions.

Contemporary 20th-century art had different intentions. Arising out of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, there was a growing rediscovery that a painting is lines, shapes, forms and colours on a flat surface. Rookmaaker's term for this is the "iconic element." These visual language elements, as they are used together pictorially, depict an artist's understanding of the structure of reality. They always give us more than the eye can see. A portrait by Rembrandt and a child's drawing of a face, can both be structurally clear in their use of a pictorial language and enable us to

Rembrandt van Rijn, *Kinderportret*

Stamp from Brazil, Child's Drawing

recognise a face. For Rookmaaker this meant that we can reject 19th-century naturalism as the only way to depict appearances and explore more expressive ways of working with these renewed stylistic means. This 20th-century work, while it may be innovative and challenging, does not search for such a deep break with the European tradition. It still explores more normal human experiences and views of reality.

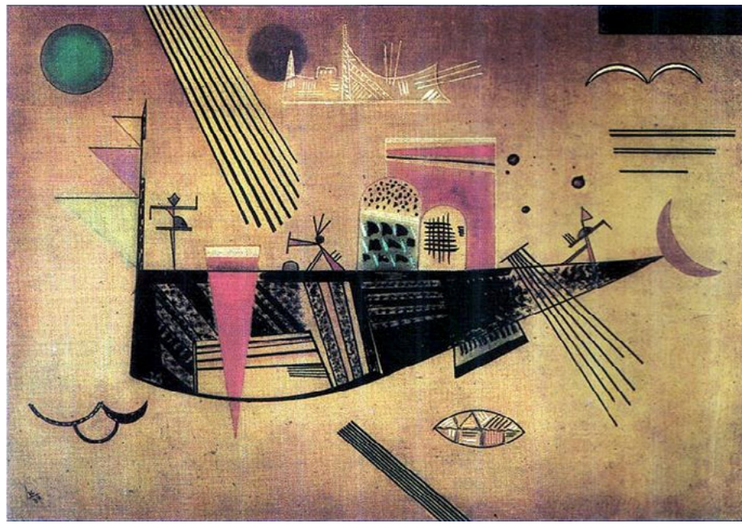
Does this mean that we can simply classify our artists as either sheep or goats? Rookmaaker recognised that individuals are complex and beyond simplistic labelling. It is possible to discern a straightforward use of 20th-century contemporary pictorial language in one work, whilst another, by the same artist, may show a Modernist attitude. Rookmaaker had great faith in the painting as the primary source of meaning. He had a high regard for Picasso as an artist, admiring Picasso's use of pictorial language in his painting *Guernica*. However, he objected when in other work, Picasso's interest in Nietzsche made evident an absurd view of humanity or reality. Rookmaaker asked if it is clearer to find traces of Gnostic thought in the catalogue of a Rauschenberg exhibition, or to recognise those traces in the work itself. He was convinced that the work itself is both clearer and more explicit.

Is Modernism just a style? Again there are no easy answers. For Rookmaaker the modern movement was not a style but an attitude, a certain spiritual insight or a feeling for the predicament of humanity. This can be expressed in a variety of styles. He listed naturalism, a certain kind of mannerism, or expressive iconic types of visual communication. These different pictorial languages are also used in 20th-century art without Modernism's intentions or undercurrents.

Significantly, Rookmaaker found modern art full of religious and spiritual content. In 1968 he introduced me to art historian Sixten Ringbom's work on the mystical and theosophical themes in modern art. This spiritual element has been hidden in plain sight, because many of the institutional guardians of Modernism chose to overlook it. Waldemar Januszczak argued, in a 2021 article, that the art historians and institutions of Modernism repeatedly ignored any idea that in Modernism there can be found religious or hermetic intentions. There was a fear that it would sully the waters. Artists, like Kandinsky, who had been accepted into the Modernist canon, never hid their interest in religion and theosophy. According to Waldemar Januszczak:

> It wasn't the artists who were hiding their spiritual drives. It was the organisations that had taken custody of their reputations.[1]

Rookmaaker never doubted that these "spiritual drives" are present in modern art. For him the real question was, what kind of spirituality or religion is being advocated. He recognised that many modern artists struggled with the loss of a spiritual dimension, which grew out of a disenchantment with aspects of Enlightenment thinking.



Wassily Kandinsky, *Launisch (Capricious)*

1. Waldemar Januszczak, "The New Paranormal: How the Art Historians got it Wrong," *Waldemar.tv*, 15 March 2021, https://waldemar.tv/the-new-paranormal-how-the-art-historians-got-it-wrong/.

Robert Delaunay, *Eiffel Tower*

He did not doubt their ability to articulate these concerns. He empathised with them, while questioning their solutions.

Rookmaaker believed that the 20th-century renewal of pictorial language opened up new and exciting ways of working. He was equally aware that pictorial languages are not neutral but devised to disclose particular attitudes or points of view. However they are malleable, so he found no contradiction in praising Feininger's and Delaunay's use of Cubism's pictorial language as positive rather than Modernist. He also speaks of beautiful work by Matisse.

Rookmaaker's particular view of Modernism; his interest in the plurality of different streams in 20th-century art and his suggestion that industrial design, advertising art and contemporary typography should be included in the study of 20th-century art, anticipated aspects of postmodernism. However, he would have rejected postmodernism's lack of belief in the possibility of a shared understanding of external reality. Despite our varied worldviews, central to Rookmaaker's thinking was a conviction that, in our humanity, we do share a created reality to which we all have access. This reality, which includes the visual arts, is ordered by God's structures and norms which, in turn, open up possibilities for us to discover. To reject them leads to abnormality. For this reason Rookmaaker was wary of the term "Christian Art." Even with good intentions, Christians may make poor art, whereas, when acting out of their created humanity, artists with no Christian profession do produce beautiful and truthful work. It may be better to speak about art which does justice to reality. However, Rookmaaker was never prescriptive about the ways in which artists who are Christians should work. Rather, they are free to explore and disclose Christian attitudes and ways of thinking in a contemporary way in a contemporary context.

Rookmaaker's restricted use of the term "modern art" means that many works, previously thought of as Modernism, can be seen in a different light as innovative and positive 20th-century contemporary works of art. Today, 21st-century art institutions promote contemporary art practice as vigorously as they did Modernism. One key characteristic of contemporary art practice is a focus on societal "issues." Again, this is only one stream in contemporary art, but it still shares Modernism's conviction that the artist is a special person with an elevated "prophetic" role. Rookmaaker's challenge to that idea of the artist's role still stands. He reminded us that we do not need to be modern in order to be contemporary. Perhaps one of our questions now should be, "Do we have to engage in contemporary art practice in order to be contemporary?"

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Henri Matisse, *Icarus* by lluisribesmateu 1969 under CC BY-NC 2.0

ROOKMAAKER & *Art Theory*

NIGEL HALLIDAY

Andy Goldsworthy, *Storm King Wall* by barryleiba under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Fifty years after publication the opening chapters of *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* still offer one of the best simple introductions to a Christian view of the history of art. It emphasises the role of visual analysis, showing how the facture of the work is essential to convey its meaning. It is also notable because Rookmaaker's account of Western art rests on history rather than theory.

The individualism and fragmentation that flowed from the Enlightenment brought an avalanche of theory upon the fine arts, as philosophers sought to explain the nature and role of art, and artists and critics laboured to justify their choices of style and content. This weight of words was engagingly mocked by Tom Wolfe in *The Painted Word*, and can be felt in the twin tomes of *Art in Theory* which take nearly 2,500 pages to span the 19th and 20th centuries.[1]

1. Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975). Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–1990* and, with Jason Gaiger, *Art in Theory 1815–1900* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, 1998).

The subtitle of the latter work, *An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, suggests the inconclusiveness of these efforts. So too does Nigel Warburton's *The Art Question*, which outlines five main modern theories of art, beginning with the views that art is about either aesthetic appreciation of form or the expression of emotion, before descending along a road of despair: that it's art because it has family resemblances to some other

Ohrid Annunciation Icon

objects already recognized as "art"; because someone says it's art and puts it in a gallery; or, finally, that no definition is possible. Warburton argues sympathetically for the pluses and minuses of each theory, but in the end shows them all to be wanting.[2]

Rookmaaker, by contrast, simply explains the history of art as having evolved from medieval icon making. An icon points the viewer to a spiritual reality: something to be believed and worshipped. This, he then shows, is what unites the subsequent Western canon: paintings and sculptures point beyond themselves to deeper realities, to the ultimate commitments of either the artist or their society; to beliefs about spiritual truth or the values by which we should live; or, as the culture becomes increasingly secular, to the fundamental question of what is real.[3]

Amadeo de Souza Cardoso, *The Leap of the Rabbit*

The absence of overt theory in Rookmaaker's account seems to have been a result not of neglect, nor of the fact that he was writing for a non-academic audience, but of conviction. In an early essay "Science, Aesthetics and Art" published in 1949, and explicitly rooted in Dooyeweerdian philosophy, he rejects the modern priority given to theorisation and espouses what he calls "naïve" experience.[4] Where the Enlightenment, with its Cartesian conviction that the human mind is the arbiter of truth, was smitten with difficulty in finding a convincing proof that anything else existed, for Rookmaaker, rooted in Christian faith and a philosophy arising from it, reality is a given, and we encounter it with a non-theoretical directness. As with reality in general, so with art in particular: it is a given to be explored rather than justified theoretically. In a similar way, Graham Birtwistle has also observed that both Rookmaaker and Francis Schaeffer avoided giving a definition or theory of "art" but based their discussions of art in creativity, another given rooted in our being made in the image of our Creator God.[5]

Despite the absence of overt theory, it is possible to reconstruct from his writings what Rookmaaker regarded as normative for a work of art: that art was essentially a communication relating to matters of religious or philosophical significance; it must therefore be rooted in representation, or else there is no medium for communication. Mere representational accuracy, however, was inadequate: the artist needed to make aesthetic adjustments in their depiction in order to convey their meaning.

It is worth also noting that Rookmaaker used to describe himself as being close to or part of the Panofsky school of art history.[6] Erwin Panofsky, reacting against the formalism of 19th-century art history, founded the discipline of "iconology" which saw art as "embodied ideas" which could be decoded.[7] Rookmaaker shares with Panofsky a commitment to understand a work of art in its social context, arguing that artists would, whether deliberately or unwittingly, express aspects of their wider contemporary culture in their work. However, whereas Panofsky would sometimes jokingly admit that someone might try to practise iconology by looking at small photographs in a book, Rookmaaker's insistence on the role of materials and facture meant that first-hand engagement with the object was always necessary.

Although one may in this way attempt to outline a norm of art in Rookmaaker's understanding, it is still rooted in the explanation of art history as received, not theoretical presuppositions. And this approach, I believe, is helpful not only in offering Christian answers to some post-Enlightenment problems, but in answering some key questions about the arts.

Firstly, Rookmaaker helps to disentangle what we loosely call "art" but might be more helpfully distinguished here as fine art from other expressions of our creativity. His historical account allows us to see fine art as an historically contingent product of Western Christian culture, not found in many other cultures, and indeed perhaps struggling to survive in an increasingly secular Western society. He was keen to avoid any sense of hierarchy among the arts,[8] but his account allows us to recognise that the tradition of fine art painting and sculpture is distinct from other arts, and has a depth of reference that they do not.

Secondly, rooting fine art in the icon tradition provides a criterion for establishing reasonable boundaries for what counts as "art." Before the Enlightenment, values in fine art were fairly easily traced through overt religious, historical or mythological subject matter or by implication in landscape, still life or genre painting. Following the Enlightenment, artists still engaged with ultimate questions of meaning and value, sometimes overtly and at other times by implication, through their exploration of the physical world, their emotions, their dreams, their own bodies, or in a perhaps perverse attempt to espouse meaninglessness.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Skiff Hires*

To see Impressionist paintings as icons rather than merely beautiful images helps us recognise the shallowness of their vision, with their focus on surface beauty and the idealisation, through their iconography, of a life apparently free of all distress or even the need to work. A century later Rookmaaker's approach helps us to accept the overblown vapidity of Post-Painterly Abstraction and the reductivism of Minimalism as they can be seen to reflect the emptiness of American materialism, with the reaction of Beuys, the Land Artists and others seeking a deeper meaning or reality in nature or myth.

As I have argued elsewhere, Tracey Emin's *My Bed* seems to sit comfortably as a work of fine art because it, perhaps defiantly, invites moral reflection on her way of life, and indeed reflection on the origin of our moral values.[9]

This is not to offer a value judgment as to whether these are good as works of art. In 50 years' time many may well find themselves confined to the basements where Victorian morality tales languished for much of the 20th century. But Rookmaaker helps to explain why they belong to the category of fine art and not just of interior decoration.

Thirdly, Rookmaaker's approach helps to establish the fine arts as something essentially rich, contrary to the Enlightenment tendency towards reductionism. Art theory of the 19th and 20th centuries seemed to pursue a lowest common denominator (LCD) definition of art: Whistler and the "Art for Art's sake" movement argued to discard morality; the realists sought to discard narrative; the Post-Impressionists discarded naturalism, and finally out went representation altogether. Rookmaaker instead offers a view of art that is essentially additive: it is form, and colour, and beauty, and references to the material world, and a reflection on the deeper issues of human life. These constituents may be present to a greater or lesser degree, but the vision of art is essentially one of richness, rather than reductionism.

Fourthly, Rookmaaker allows us to say that fine art does not have to be comprehensible to everyone. Modernism's

2. Nigel Warburton, *The Art Question* (London: Routledge, 2003).
3. See for instance Rookmaaker's *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (Leicester: Crossway, 1994), 18.
4. Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker, ed., *The Complete Works of Hans Rookmaaker*, vol. 2 (Carlisle: Piquant, 2003), 93–113.
5. Graham Birtwistle, "Art and the Arts," in *Art in Question*, ed. Tim Dean and David Porter (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987), 21.
6. I am grateful to Peter S. Smith and John Walford for this information.
7. Michael A. Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 26.
8. See Birtwistle, "Art and the Arts," 20–21. See also Rookmaaker's *The Creative Gift* (Leicester: Crossway, 1981), 40.
9. https://www.nigelhalliday.org/tracey-emin-my-bed.

Helen Frankenthaler, *Trojan Gates* by rocor under CC BY-NC 2.0

search for an LCD in art went hand in hand with a kind of universalism: Roger Fry's seminal *Vision and Design* of 1920 sought a unified approach to Claude, and the Post-Impressionists, and tribal art from Africa and the pre-Columbian Americas. Rookmaaker, like Panofsky, recognised that a work of fine art was a product of a particular society at a particular moment, in which the artist both knowingly and unwittingly introduced allusions from his or her own cultural background, which are by the very nature of the case less obvious, or perhaps even less comprehensible, to those from other cultural backgrounds. This does not in any way diminish the work of art: it simply means that some viewers need more help than others to enter into the world of the work, and the depths and richness of the allusions within the work may not be exhausted.

One of the apparent motives behind Modernism's drive for an LCD definition of art was to make art accessible to everyone. However, as Warburton observed, this was not the case with Clive Bell's account of significant form, which ended with a snobbish distinction between those who were sensitive to it and those who were not.[10] Rookmaaker's view of art allows that not everyone will be equally at home in the arts, but the door through study and education is open to everyone equally.

After many years as a pastor and Bible teacher, Nigel has now retired and returned to his first love of art history. He is currently researching the influence of the Reformation on the later work of Michelangelo.

The World is My Classroom - *and Yours*

SARA OSBORNE

Kayaking in Twin Lakes, Colorado

It's late May, and my boys are playing on the floor with a Lego dog sled and its canine companions as I pack our family's bags for "the last frontier." *Alaska's Dog Heroes* and Jack London's *Northland Stories* are strewn next to piles of base layers, down jackets, and raincoats. Our adventure is just days away, and the house is abuzz with excitement. A year of relative isolation has certainly offered us some benefits (e.g., family time, ad infinitum!), but our brood is ready to hit the road. We are tired of only seeing ourselves.

While wanderlust can be as dangerous as any passion taken to extremes, I propose that the world makes a wonderful classroom. As Mark Twain so eloquently put it in *The Innocents Abroad*, "Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." Exploring new parts of the world (or country, or city, or neighbourhood …) offers an education in perspective and empathy accompanied by a practicum in applied philosophy. Travellers are exposed to the other in a unique way, offering both increased knowledge of other cultures and the opportunity to reflect on different worldviews in action. The world is a ready classroom.

Interdisciplinary Learning

Travel provides a rich environment for interdisciplinary learning. A people's history mingles with its art and architecture; a place's economy tells us something about its government and social ethics. A traveller cannot easily separate a culture into tidy compartments – nor should this be his goal. Addressing subjects such as science alongside history or theology next to visual art not only attracts our interest to potentially daunting subject matter, but it offers grand opportunities for connecting ideas. These experiences serve as small case studies for Christian worldview instruction. As Abraham Kuyper famously proclaimed, "There is not a square inch of the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" For the teacher who longs for her students to see the world as a whole creation under the sovereign power of God, such a classroom is invaluable.

The value of the interdisciplinary classroom extends beyond the cultivation and connection of information and ideas, however. Learning through travel also affords students the opportunity to exercise different skills and learning styles in tandem. Exploring a new place or people is a multisensory experience. Students who might normally be impeded by a reading disability can learn through audio tours, visual displays and the sights and sounds of experience. Creatives can showcase their learning through journalling poetry or sketching art, nature and architecture. Budding botanists can keep plant logs and collect leaf rubbings. When the world is your classroom, assessment tools for all types of learners abound!

An Education in Virtue

In addition to intellectual stimulation, travel presents the student with a unique environment for character formation and development. Going somewhere new requires courage, flexibility, and resilience. Engaging with others successfully requires consideration and compromise. Natural friction occurs when we enter into someone else's way of life – whether by stomaching unusual food, navigating foreign transportation systems or deciphering unspoken rules of commerce. Like sandpaper on wood, this friction rubs away at our pickiness and preferences, leaving us more well rounded and better able to cope with differences.

The cross-cultural experiences inherent in travel often serve to magnify our character flaws. We confront irritations and inconveniences in our traditional homes and classrooms, but these usually occur under certain frameworks and routines that provide boundaries of understanding. Most of the time, students understand the expectations of school behaviour, and children know the rules of their households.

When we enter into new places and cultures, our expectations are often shattered, and we struggle to orient ourselves to new rules and routines. The work of adjusting to this "otherness" is difficult, but rewarding, resulting in new-found courage, perseverance and empathy.

Enriching the Soul

Learning need not be assessed in order to be authentic, however.

Staring out at the Appalachian Mountains

Alongside intellectual stimulation and character formation, travel also offers enrichment for the heart and soul – a sometimes elusive classroom experience. Who can quantify the value of encountering beauty in varied forms or participating in worship amongst the global church? Can we ever achieve proficiency in seeing God at work in the world? We are ever learners in this respect, and that is right and good. Encountering different ways of living, working, and even educating reminds us that being human is not a Western phenomenon – or Christian one. Travellers are exposed to a world of discovery, yet often that discovery makes a U-turn inward, forcing us to consider and reconsider what we believe, what we know, who we are, whose we are. With the world as my classroom, there is much room for such enriching thought.

With a few days left before our grand Alaskan adventure, we're still marching methodically through reading lessons and math drills. We won't throw out our regular curricula when we return home. Exploiting travel as a tool for education doesn't mean we've sold all we own to "worldschool" in an RV (although that admittedly has a certain allure to it!). Still I wait with curious anticipation, wondering how this next journey will change us all – as individuals and as a family. Fellow traveller Tsh Oxenreider quotes Wendell Berry to describe this individual and yet communal experience: "Nobody can discover the world for someone else. Only when we discover it for ourselves does it become common ground and a common bond and we cease to be alone." With long summer days ahead, ripe for travel and exploration, the world is my classroom – and yours. May we steward well these God-given opportunities for learning, growth and togetherness.

Sara Osborne is a writing instructor at College of the Ozarks, a lifelong learner, and the mother of four curious explorers. She and her husband are always on the lookout for the next family adventure.

Body Literacy

GENEVIEVE WEDGBURY

Body Literacy is a term I've only just learnt. It excited me so much as it gave a name to the journey I have been on over the past few years. You can read more about it in an upcoming edition of *Ethics in Conversation*. But what is it? And why is it important?

I think in very broad terms, body literacy is about AWARENESS and NOTICING. And as the term suggests, having an awareness of your body specifically and noticing how it reacts and responds to all aspects of life.

Jozef Israëls, *Sunday Morning*

Jesus exclaims in John 10:10 that he has come to give us life, and life in abundance! Though, as asserted by Professor Robert Thomas in his book *How to Live*, we are expected to live twice as long as our grandparents, the abundant life must also be about the quality of our lives, and not just the longevity. The book also cites the "staggering rise in chronic, degenerative diseases, the *origins* [italics mine] of which are strongly linked to lifestyle and diet," and which interestingly "affects prosperous countries most dramatically."
Speaking for myself, how I feel physically absolutely affects how I feel mentally. I believe that Jesus has a wonderful purpose for each and every one of us (Ephesians 2:10), but it can be hard to enter into the freedom that Christ has for us when we are hampered with health issues which could be positively affected by diet and lifestyle. Of course, we serve a wonderful and gracious God who works *all things* together for good for those who love him (Romans 8:28 – emphasis mine). I am a testament to this, as through my own struggles with menstrual health, I have become an advocate for the healing power of nutrition and the positive effects of exercise and prayer.

I have learnt (though it's a never-ending journey!) to become body literate and noticing how what I eat affects how I think and feel has become something of a pastime! I notice, for example, that if I have an alcoholic drink in the evening, I usually wake up in the night with heart palpitations. I also notice that if my heart is palpitating, my mind races, and it is easier to feel anxious. I also notice that if my mind is racing, I am usually not paying attention to my breathing, which tends to be shallow. If I then make an effort to breathe deeply, my thought patterns calm. I notice that if I eat a lot of sugary food, a few days later, I will feel inexplicably tired – and want more! I am also aware of foods that my body seems to really enjoy – like wholegrain rice, olive oil, fish and vegetables – with the odd beef steak thrown in!
As I have journeyed on, I am enjoying more and more of the benefits of eating well, exercising and taking time out to be quiet and still. I know I have more energy and I feel calmer and brighter.

Photo: Jan Kalish (@jankalishphotography)

If you would like to begin the journey towards body literacy, I can recommend the following three publications:

How to Live by Professor Robert Thomas
The Stress Solution by Dr Rangan Chatterjee
The Doctor's Kitchen (Eat To Beat Illness) by Dr Rupy Aujla.

Genevieve Wedgbury has just joined the KLC LeadershipTeam and is also an Associate Fellow. She is General Manager for her father's small marine business, as well as pursuing her creative projects.
Visit @jankalishphotography to see more of Jan Kalish's work.

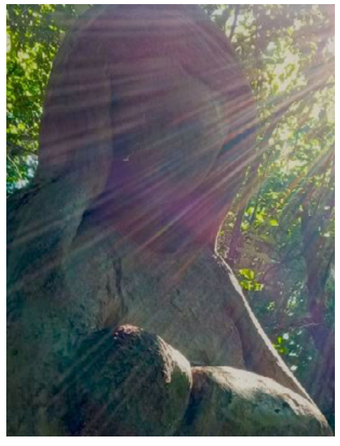
ON RETREAT: Hiddenness

MARIT GREENWOOD

At one point in the online short course I took a while ago on Teresa of Ávila's work *The Interior Castle*, lecturer James Finley offered the perspective that the whole of the spiritual journey of an individual has as its aim to "join God in knowing who I am, hidden with Christ in God," to ground myself in awareness of my "God-given nature, invincibly precious in my fragility."

Hidden with Christ in God. Paul's words, floundering for language that will adequately convey the fullness of this to his listeners in Colossae who were inclined to get caught up instead in the visibility of the empire society in which they lived.

These rich perspectives returned to mind when I, like a moth circling a candle flame, returned to Origins Retreat Centre yet again. They came to the fore as I walked in the poplar grove, looking for a particular sculpture in the *Stations of Life*, a series of twelve visual stopping points highlighting pivotal events in Jesus' incarnate life, hidden variously amongst the undergrowth and trunks of the poplars.



My search was arrested by a plate-sized spider web lying horizontally across my route, hindering my progress. It was the first web I had seen, although I had felt a number as I walked, the first human to enter the grove that morning.

I saw it because it was suddenly illuminated by the leaf-filtered morning sunlight. Shimmering. Unusually horizontal. Across the path, with its spider a translucent, sun-shot little being, delicately hanging upside down in the centre of its radiant web, its "feet" connected to the web like an upside down ballerina perfectly en pointe, eight times over. An arachnid jewel!

And we learn from Paul through Colossians that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden within Christ. Jewels of a different sort. Hidden.

Within the space of a few breaths, the sunlight fell elsewhere, the web and its creator invisible to me again. Yet rationally I knew both were still there. An unlikely image of these words of Jesus: "I am in the Father and you in me and I in you." Developed in Revelation through the image of the Slain Lamb being in the centre of the throne occupied by God, and the host of faithful witnesses crowding around the throne in a webbing of worship.

How frightfully humbling to me to have a spider as my teacher.

The lesson continued. I retreated and became aware of the undergrowth being peppered with webs, now visible, now not, depending on how the sunlight fell. Most resistant to being photographed effectively, their transparency (hiddenness?), too insubstantial.

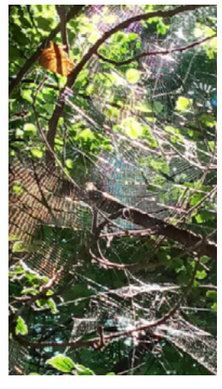
Hidden in Christ – not really on display.

By the time I reached the station *Incarnation*, I could accept, rather than brush off, the trace of web on the face of the svelte Mary sculpture. And it seemed somehow fitting now that because of the interplay of light and shadow, I could at times not witness the intimacy of the gaze between baby Jesus and her.

The hiddenness of intimacy.

Fitting, too, that beyond her shoulder, an entire village of webs and occupants shone forth in early morning iridescence in the tangle of undergrowth there.

The whole scene, spiders and myself included, an encircling of sacred obscurity in the softlight poplar grove.



Photographs taken at Origins Retreat Centre by Marit Greenwood.

Marit Greenwood and her husband live in South Africa. She is an artist who is drawn to contemplative spirituality.

Place Matters

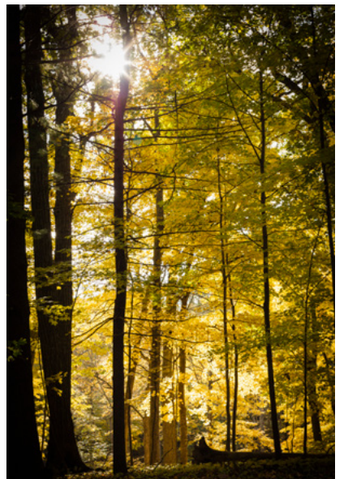
CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW

Place is ubiquitous, but in our modern world we hardly notice it. How did it come into focus for me? Years ago I helped a PhD student with a project on the anthropology of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This sparked an interest in pilgrimage and sacred place and led to Fred Hughes and me publishing an edited volume titled *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* (Ashgate, 2004). Sacred place backed me into place, and this rich exploration led to my *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian view of Place for Today* (Baker Academic, 2011).

A great thing about place is that while study of place can lead one into dense theory, it is also wonderfully practical. This is because humans are by nature embodied and thus always embedded in a place. As the saying goes: place forms us and we form place. When it comes to place the effect of Covid is ambiguous. On the one hand our movement has been restricted and so we have been constrained to attend to the places we inhabit, in some cases to see them for the first time. On the other hand, as Ken Worpole points out "Covid has dramatically accelerated the long-term shift from a place-based to a non-place, networked public realm" ("Covid and the Rise of the Non-Place," *New Statesman* 18-24 June 2021, 49). During Covid the online retail market has captured billions, and it is unlikely to relinquish this easily. Thus, Worpole argues that "Attachment to place is the latest terrain on which culture wars are about to be fought." (ibid., 51) Intriguingly the UK government has set up an "Office for Place" as part of its Building Better, Building Beautiful programme.

The virtual brings many gifts but it cannot replace place, the matrix of individual and community life. As we emerge from the pandemic we are presented with an opportunity to rethink place while retaining the gifts of the virtual. When it comes to place a picture is indeed often better than a thousand words. Chicago has many lovely places but is also awash with monotonous suburban sprawl. While living there for nearly a year nothing prepared me for a visit to Mundelein Seminary. Established in 1844, the seminary has a long history. Occupying some 600 acres it is utterly breathtaking. Once I discovered it I was drawn back to it again and again. We are grateful that the seminary has provided us with photographs that provide some sense of the exquisite beauty of the campus. As useful as is the virtual, it would be a sin to allow the virtual to replace a learning place like this. Of course, to build and maintain a place like Mundelein is expensive, but it allows our imaginations to soar as we rethink what might be possible today. Of course, good places need not be expensive. As I discovered doing my research, the poor in their shacks often have a greater sense of the aesthetic than do the middle class amidst suburban sprawl and cookie-cutter housing. Ordinary and humble can be beautiful, but so too is a seminary like Mundelein.

Craig Barthlomew is the Director of the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology.



KUYPER, *THE AESTHETIC SPHERE,* AND ART

MARLEEN HENGELAAR-ROOKMAAKER

After three centuries of silence about art in Reformed theological circles in the Netherlands – apart from catechism sermons about the second commandment – suddenly there was Abraham Kuyper, whose great merit it was that he once again drew attention to art. The austere churches of his day had whitewashed walls and the congregation, sitting on hard pews, was world averse and a-cultural. But had it always been like that? Or was that a mystical and pietistic distortion of Calvin's position? By going back to the original Calvinism, Kuyper wanted to show that the reformer had been emphatically positive towards art and culture. Next he went on to integrate this culturally engaged point of view in his own Neo-Calvinistic world of ideas. He devoted himself to removing the great prejudice that Calvinism had always and everywhere amounted to artistic poverty.

Abraham Kuyper is not so much known as a connoisseur of art, but in fact, he was. The term "art" included for him all forms of art, from poetry to visual art and music. He did not take much notice of music, dance and theatre, but as a student in Leyden he occupied himself with literature as well as theology. At the Free University in Amsterdam, founded by himself, he lectured as professor not only of theology, but also of literature and aesthetics. He even considered the subject of aesthetics so important that he made it compulsory for theological students. That would even now be considered progressive. The poet Bilderdijk was his big hero and he himself, as a prolific writer, was a masterful employer of metaphor. He was also interested in the visual arts. During his travels he visited the large museums and he corresponded with the Impressionist painter Jozef Israëls. He published a book with prints of biblical scenes by modern painters such as Max Liebermann and Ilya Repin. He recorded his ideas about art most comprehensively in two publications: *Het calvinisme en de kunst* (Calvinism and Art, 1888) and in his *Lectures on Calvinism* (Stone Lectures, 1899).

A COHERENT WORLDVIEW

In an essay dating from 1898 Kuyper praised the memorial monument for Pope Pius VII (1831) by the Icelandic-Danish artist Bertel Thorvaldsen, which he had seen on one of his travels to St Peter's Basilica in Rome. On this monument the pope is seated in the centre with an allegorical female figure on each side. The woman on his right is dressed in a lion's skin, denoting *fortitudo* or divine power. She looks up, full of faith and emotion, her arms crossed over her heart. The other woman, flanked by an owl and with a book or Bible in her hand, represents *sapientia* or divine wisdom. She looks down pensively. Why would this work have had such an impact on Kuyper? Not just because Thorvaldsen, a Lutheran artist, had contributed to this Catholic bulwark, but certainly also because the two women unite feeling and reason, faith and power, wisdom and the Word, and an orientation towards both heaven and earth. The combination of all these elements played an important role in Kuyper's own thinking.

In 1863 Kuyper arrived in the village of Beesd as a young, liberal minister. Here he was impressed by a group of discontented churchgoers. Even though they were simple villagers and agricultural workers, they possessed a broad knowledge of the Bible, a lived faith, and a coherent worldview rooted in Calvin's theology. This led to an important change in Kuyper's thinking that steered him in the direction of an orthodox faith and an integrated Calvinistic worldview, in which all his knowledge, convictions and activities merged into a coherent whole. The basis for this cohesion forms the idea that Christ is the sovereign Lord over everything and everyone and that his lordship includes the upholding of the laws the Creator established for each sphere of life – for example for the church, the state, religion, the aesthetic sphere and art. Every sphere is irreducible to the others, obeys its own laws and grows to maturity only when it can develop independently and in complete freedom. What is unique in Kuyper's Christian frame of thought is that art constitutes an inextricable part of the whole and that it sees the aesthetic sphere as an essential element of human life.

ANTITHESIS AND COMMON GRACE

A second basic element in Kuyper's theology of art is the triad of creation, fall, redemption. Art is part of God's good creation but can be seized by sin in a variety of ways (impurity, lack of truth, as an idol, as propaganda etc.). Even so, the abused genres, styles and media can be employed for good again. Calvin's reaction to the evil in art was characterized by caution: no art in the church and only rhymed psalm singing. Kuyper's reaction came to expression in his idea of the antithesis.

Kuyper for example turned against the pantheism found in Dutch literature of his time and against the surfeit of fantasy and the subjectivity in the reproduction of reality that were propagated by the idealistic stream in the field of aesthetics of his day. For Kuyper reality and the beauty of the creation were an objective given. He saw it as art's calling to reproduce the beauty in nature and reality in a way that exceeds this beauty, whereby works of art point forward to the future glory. Or, to put it in Kuyper's own words, "to climb up through nostalgia for lost beauty to the anticipatory enjoyment of the future glory." However, he never elaborated on this programme for art as he considered this the task of the artists themselves. He also did not to any great extent expand on the antithesis in the sphere of art as here another concept was more fundamental to him: common grace.

Like Calvin, Kuyper made a distinction between God's special grace and common grace. Special grace relates to the redemption of human beings, common grace relates to the maintenance of the world after the fall for believers as well as unbelievers, so that an honourable and rich human life is possible for both. In his Genesis 4:20 commentary Calvin said that art is a gift of God, which he gives without distinction to all people. He added: "These rays of divine light often shone most powerfully on unbelieving nations, as experience teaches us." Kuyper's ideas about art continued to build on this, so that he could see Greek art as the first apex in art, in which the knowledge and execution of the natural laws of art flourished. This also explains why Kuyper adopted a completely open attitude towards artistic expression from all epochs and all corners of the earth and was not looking for a specifically Christian art. Hence, he gave no extensive elaboration of the influence of worldviews on the arts, as he has done for the sciences.

NO UNIQUE STYLE

For Kuyper the second apex in art history was the Renaissance, in which a new art developed based on a rebirth of classical values. The central idea was that art's beauty should soar above the everyday, material and sinful world in order to reflect something of a higher and better

world. It may be clear that Kuyper harked back to this era for his own thinking about good art.

The art that flourished during the Dutch Golden Age in the 17th century Kuyper saw as the third pinnacle. According to him the art of this age could flourish because of Calvin's contribution: first of all because he had liberated art from the grasp of the church so that it could come into its own and secondly because art could then direct itself to a broad scale of new subjects such as the landscape, still life and portrait. Ordinary, everyday life was upgraded to a worthy subject for art.

Kuyper emphasized that Calvinistic art did not need to look for a unique style. That is what he praised in Calvin's vision and in Dutch 17th-century art. Yet the question remains whether Kuyper does justice to Calvin here, as you could say that the music of the rhymed psalms did bring something new and unique, even under the supervision of the reformer himself. The psalm melodies were certainly in keeping with the idiom of that time, but the use of only notes of one or two counts for the sake of the necessary dignity (*poids et majesté*) of the rhythmic singing was completely new. People were used to the otherworldly Gregorian chants, which explains why the revolutionary Calvinistic church melodies even so were dismissively called Geneva jigs.

With regard to the visual arts the Reformed artists of the 16th and 17th centuries did connect with contemporaneous developments, apart from the prohibition on art in the church and the representation of God and saints. Calvin was of the opinion that a painting could have two functions: to teach and to entertain. What is of interest here is that not only the biblical depictions of that era were didactic in intent, but also the genres coming into vogue that reflected daily reality. A landscape was never just a landscape and a still life not simply a still life. Via symbolic elements these works possessed a more profound religious or moral layer of meaning. As far as I have been able to discover, Kuyper had no knowledge of this symbolic content of 17th-century art. He saw it as a form of realism.

An example of the didactic intent of 17th-century works is a biblical scene by the Calvinist artist Jan Victors titled *Abraham says goodbye to Lot and his family*. After a dispute arose between Abraham's shepherds and those of Lot, because there was not enough grass for both flocks, Abraham suggests to Lot that they should part ways. He allows Lot to choose which way he will move. "The whole land is open to you," says Abraham generously, with a broad wave of his hand. Lot, in spite of the quarrels between the shepherds in the background, is calmly eating a meal with his family (not mentioned in the biblical text). He is leaning back, his hand on his stomach. His face speaks volumes. His wife behind him sniggers about Abraham's apparent foolishness. Lot chooses the "best" part and will end up in Sodom and Gomorrah. The dog, as a paragon of faithfulness, stands by Abraham. In this way, the work contrasts the broad, greedy way with the narrow, generous way as a warning for the viewer.

Jan Victors, *Abraham says goodbye to Lot and his family*

LITURGY AND ART IN THE CHURCH

The Dutch Reformed Church split, known as the *Doleantie* of 1886, and the joining in 1892 of the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerken* with a part of the *Christelijk Gereformeerden* resulted in the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*. The formation of this new denomination demanded a renewed reflection on the liturgy, church architecture and interior church design. As spiritual leader of the new denomination Kuyper published 70 articles on these subjects in *De Heraut* between 1897 and 1901. Supplemented with a further 40 articles, they were published in 1911 in the book *Onze Eeredienst* (Our Worship). In developing his thoughts, Kuyper went back to the order of worship as set down by the Synod of Dordt in 1618/19. This meant that he opted for a more elaborate liturgy than the sermon-centred worship service to which people had grown accustomed. He also allowed for a certain liberty in how this order of service was put into practice locally and weekly.

Kuyper saw the worship service first and foremost as a gathering of believers, who in fellowship with one another want to meet and worship God and want to be strengthened and edified in their faith. "Then," he says, "the sincere believer awaits an almost mystical experience: he will feel his heart quiver with love for his brothers, he will put worldly concerns away, and his soul will draw to heaven." To him this was the beating heart of the worship service. It is not so strange, therefore, that he spoke with appreciation of the Anglican liturgy with its emphasis on reverence and adoration, i.e., of the traditional Anglican liturgy, not the High Church version of the Oxford Movement with its *smells* and *bells*. According to Kuyper externalities such as "kneeling, smells, Ave Marias and paternosters" only distract from the inner meeting with God.

A comparable tension is seen in Kuyper's thoughts about art in the church. On the one hand, he is not averse to art in the church, but on the other hand he believes that "external beauty must not drive away inner beauty." He thus approaches art and the image with a certain restraint, even though you would think that for him they would, as God's good gifts of creation, also be able to contribute to the inner experience of God. However that may be, it certainly was a first big step forward that Kuyper opened the door for art in the church in the form of stained-glass windows, wall paintings, painted panels on the organ and decorative elements.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

After the *Doleantie* there was a great demand for new church buildings. In the 50 years that followed approximately 400 Reformed churches were built. Starting from the idea about worship as a gathering of believers, Kuyper promoted the basic form of a half circle or amphitheatre, so that people could see each other and the minister. The pulpit, and thus the Word, took a central position. In contrast to what was customary before the formation of the new denomination, the pews for the dignitaries (the so-called "elders' pews") were left out, because all congregational members sit under the Word without distinction. In conformity with his teaching of sphere sovereignty Kuyper left the further execution to the architects. Over time a typical Reformed church building style developed from the hand of Reformed architects such as Tjeerd Kuipers, Egbert Reitsma and B. T. Boeyinga. Initially they followed the neo-styles of that era, later that of the Amsterdam School of Berlage c.s. The Wilhelmina Church in Dordrecht is a notable textbook case of Kuyper's opinions. The window about the parable of the sower, pictured below, can be found in this church.

The building history of the church on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam clearly shows that membership of the Reformed church was not a requirement for the architects. At the insistence of Kuyper – who acted as chairman of the building committee – non-Reformed architects were also invited to take part in a closed competition, among whom were A. van Gendt and G. B. Salm. The design by Salm was ultimately deemed the best. He enriched the Amsterdam canals with an elegant, neo-Renaissance, Reformed cathedral. An interesting detail is that Kuyper arranged to order folding pews from

America because of their suitability par excellence “to sit down reverently.”

INFLUENCE

When we look at the influence of Kuyper’s ideas about art, we have to conclude that apart from church architecture and art inside the church they have barely instigated any artistic activity. It is difficult to imagine anyhow that his preference for reflecting idealized beauty would have had any chance of success in the cultural climate of the 20th century.

What has been shown to be more influential are Kuyper’s theological and theoretical ideas about art. The philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd for example elaborated further on the modal law spheres and the aesthetic sphere. Art historian Hans Rookmaaker examined the cohesion of worldviews with expressions of art. Aesthetician Calvin Seerveld followed Kuyper’s vision of the importance of an artistic sphere that can freely unfold and of the indispensability of the aesthetic aspect in human life. However, all of this did not mean that the Protestant community in general became enthused for art and beauty, but Kuyper’s positive and open vision on art and culture did start something that continued – in fits and starts – to make itself felt in the 20th century. And even still, within the Reformed world attention for art is slowly but surely gaining more and more ground.

At the occasion of the 140th anniversary of the VU University (*Vrije Universiteit*) in 2020, a work of art by Wafae Ahalouch was installed at the entrance to the auditorium. This wall tapestry, titled *Trinity: Kuyper Revisited*, captures Kuyper’s idea of unity and cohesion in created reality. The artist was struck by Kuyper’s statement that “God created a magical union between head, heart, and hand.” The tapestry’s centre shows the outlines of the heads of a man and a woman, an anatomical heart and two hands holding pens that have drawn long lines. The drawing is placed in a yellow-edged square within a pentagon, with two three-pointed projections above and below. The outward directed points that contain black, white and orange stripes (or spheres!) create a dynamic effect of radiation, enhanced by the orange clouds. The artwork pays tribute to Kuyper’s impact – with head, heart and hands – on all of reality.

Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker is chief editor of ArtWay (www.artway.eu), a website about the visual arts and faith. She edited the *Complete Works* of her father, Hans Rookmaaker; has contributed to many books and has written articles about classical and popular music, liturgy, and the visual arts.

LIFE IN TRANSEPT

Towards Integration of Contemporary Arts and the Sacred Spaces in Church

OTTO BAM AND JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

Everyday church life and contemporary art rarely share the same spaces. Some might even regard them as antithetical in nature. Contemporary art is often seen as more suited to the art gallery than the church building – the domain of the secular rather than the sacred. This is reflective of a broader tendency towards compartmentalisation in our culture. Whether it is of the sacred and the secular, intellectual and aesthetic, or physical and spiritual, such compartmentalisation has had an impoverishing effect on the church and the surrounding culture.

Transept, a recent arts project hosted by 40 Stones in collaboration with KRUX, sought to call such compartmentalisation into question. The project sought to explore ways to reintroduce, indeed, reconcile fine art and the place of worship and to explore new ways of integrating contemporary aesthetic forms into the liturgy of the church.

Twelve artists were invited to respond to the architecture of Christ Church Somerset West – a Reformed Anglican church whose new building was completed in 2019. The unassuming yet remarkable structure, which might easily be mistaken for a silo or reservoir, was designed by renowned architect Jo Noero. The building uses modest materials to great effect and achieves the stated aims of the architect to “create a space in which everything was elevated from the necessary to the beautiful.”[1] This building was the ideal setting for *Transept*, which similarly sought to explore ways in which to imbue the mundane with a sense of the sublime, and aid reflection on the way the commonplace is, in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, “charged with the grandeur of God.”[2]

1. Jo Noero, quoted in Biddi Rorke, “Architecture Focus: Somerset West Church,” *Visi Magazine* (May 2020).
2. Gerard Manley Hopkins, *“God’s Grandeur” and Other Poems* (Courier Corporation, 1995).

The title of the project alludes to the part in earliest church architecture of the first basilicas between the nave and the apse, between the congregation and the altar. This is the symbolic threshold between heaven and earth. It is where immanence meets transcendence. The circular floor plan of the architect’s design elaborates on the idea of the transept in a way which could be read as complicating the distinction between the commonplace and the sacred. Here, heaven and earth are pictured as overlapping, and the sense of the “everyday” and the commonplace is immersed in the glorious light that enters through the cross-shaped windows above the inner ring of the building.

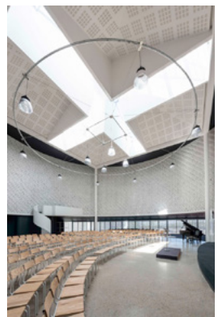
The opening night of the *Transept* exhibition (17 September 2021): Approaching the foyer of the main church building,

Justin Southey, *Dévoiler*

visitors were greeted by *Dévoiler*, an impressive canvas with sweeping strokes of gold, white and blue.

Once inside in the church, *Kompas*, *In Remembrance* and *From Dust to Dust* variously drew attention to bodily orientation and perception, calling the senses from passive observation to imaginative participation. In *From Dust to Dust* and *In Remembrance,* the artist depicts artificial flowers that are commonly seen on graves to comment on our paradoxical use of plastic, which in itself is everlasting,

Christ Church Somerset West, South Africa. Images: Paris Brummer



Klara-Marie Den Heijer, *Kompas* (detail)

Amy De Vries, *From Dust To Dust* and *In Remembrance*

Lizelle Lazarus and Elbie Visser, *Thin Places* (with detail)

to comment on those who have passed away, a process which to Christians is the hope of everlasting life.

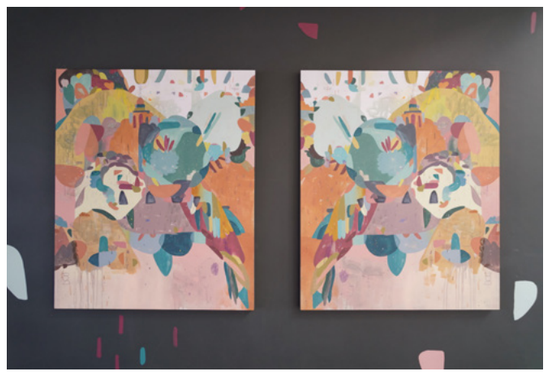
Moving out from under the low ceiling of the outer rim of the building, *Thin Places*, *Our Prayer* and *Axis Mundi* drew one's attention upwards from the horizontal to the vertical plane, even as one bathed in the light that fills the inner part of the building from above. *Axis Mundi*, with its carved tapered forms on either side of a slice of open inner space, aptly reflects the sometimes unnervingly close relationship characterized by the notion of a transept; the nearness that is possible between the one side and the other, the sacred and the commonplace. *Thin Places*, an installation comprising a length of cloth strewn with stains of red wine, spices, tea, dirt and flour reflects the oft messy vertical two-way conversation of a prayer in those times of life wherein we are sometimes stretched too thin.

The impactful circular centrepiece, *In Part*, reflected the ceiling above in its polished yet blemished surface – bringing to the floor, "as in a mirror dimly," a glimpse of what is above.

Like Father Like Son, *Breathing Prayer* and *Nachitindinkana*, each in its own way, facilitated reflection, lament, penance, celebration and intercession, calling to remembrance those outside the walls of the church. The Christian life is in many ways life in the transept; we live on the threshold of the already and the not yet. We are learning what it is to dwell with God in his good creation even as we await its ultimate renewal. The remarkable works that formed part of the *Transept* collaborative arts installation worked in synthesis with architectural space to illustrate the potential of the arts to draw attention to and counteract artificial delineations of the sacred and the everyday. This was a step towards a renewed vision for the potential role that contemporary arts may yet play in the life of the church.

Chris Soal, *Axis Mundi* (detail)

Jonathan Griffiths and Nericke Labuschagne, *In Part*



Paul Senyol, *Like Father Like Son*

Jonathan Griffiths is a visual artist and the director of 40 Stones. He draws inspiration from the beauty and grandeur of the Stellenbosch winelands where he lives.

Otto Bam is a musician, writer and student of literature from Stellenbosch, South Africa. He is a member of KRUX and seeks to cultivate a deeper understanding of the role of the imagination in Christian discipleship.

For detailed information and images of each artwork, and more information about *Transept* visit the 40 Stones website HERE. For more information about KRUX visit www.krux.africa.

Images of Christ Church Somerset West courtesy of Paris Brummer in *Visi Magazine*. Images of artworks courtesy of Bianca Grobbelaar, Matthew Courtney, Heidi Liesl Salzwedel and @40 stones_.

Old Man Under the Night

GEORGE HOBSON

I stood like an old man under the night
With all the stars sprinkled across heaven like crystals.
I seemed to hear them tinkle like sheep-bells
Far off in the earth-warm fields
Where the sheep were settling down to sleep
In night's cavernous barn.

I saw the Big Dipper scooping up space
And its handle curving toward the bowl of the Little Dipper
Scooping up space, both Dippers hung in the void
As they were long ago when I stood wide-eyed,
A young man, and the old world too
Seemed young then to my eye.

I stood under the night like an old man
And saw a shooting star streak across the black
And go out like a spark somewhere out there,
And the Dippers motionless meanwhile,
Scooping out black space
Forever and ever.

I remembered I was once a young man
And went to and fro, here and there, like a firefly
Flitting about in the air everywhere
In the night, unconscious of time,
Till one day I was aware suddenly
That time was slipping by.

And it was like patterns of clouds at sunset—
You see the patterns changed but not the change itself;
And it was like waves seen from a plane high up—
You don't see the waves actually breaking,
Only the foam on the sea's face,
The waves having broken.

I stood under the night, an old man, and saw
My life a shooting star having streaked across heaven,
Persons and places fixed fast in the field
Of time past, like the stars in the Dippers,
And I seemed to hear them tinkling faintly
Like sheep-bells in the night.

Under the immense night I stand now, an old man,
And contemplate the nature of eternity.
Shall I not go out soon from this starred cave
Into light-filled Day, where change
Isn't loss, where once is now,
Where all good is present?

Shall I not stream with the persons I've cherished
Through reaches of creation unimaginable now?
The field of time will be a field of love,
The young will be wise, the old, young,
Constancy of life will prevail,
And ceaseless communion.

Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night over the Rhone*

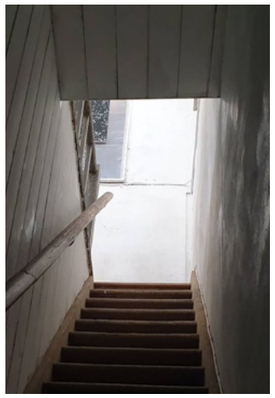
See more from George Hobson on his website: https://www.georgehobson.com, and find his poetry and theological works here.

IN THE STUDIO

WITH WALTER HAYN AND JORELLA ANDREWS

Walter Hayn lives in Penge, London. Alongside his practice as a painter, he is a part-time school art teacher and works for his church, Ichthus Christian Fellowship, with particular responsibility for children and artists attending the church. Jorella Andrews speaks to him about his work.

Jorella Andrews: The studio in which you've been working since 2019 is a large, square room, with windows on all sides. Remarkably, it's located in what was a long-disused, debris-filled church tower of Penge Congregational Church, and it is reached by stairways that become more precarious the further up you go. What has working in this space made possible?



Church Tower Studio, Exterior (left) and Interior (right), Penge. Photos: Jorella Andrews

Walter Hayn: I had for years been working from a studio-room in my home, and quite apart from contending with the strong smell of oil paint and turpentine, I'd started using bitumen and silicone rubber whose fumes are even more hazardous. Previously also, space constraints meant that I had to put the most recent canvas away and then haul out another from the growing pile. Having this studio has meant that much of my work in progress is exposed and hanging around me like a developing exhibition.

Studio interior, Penge, 2021. Photo: Ethan Hayn

Another thing I've loved about this studio is its high ceiling, and that to me has a psychological impact; no longer feeling cramped, it allows me to aspire higher as it were.

JA: In our conversations over the years, the longing to reach higher in a spiritual sense has come up again and again; this idea of being able to push your head up above the canopy and see far into the distance. And now, here you are, in this studio which literally is a high place. But I know that what has become apparent to you is that if this studio-as-high-place enables far-seeing, it has become more about internal rather than external vision, hasn't it?

WH: The desire to see into the distance effectively has always been important to me. On many levels. During my two years of military service in South Africa, I did patrol work in the war zone of northern Namibia, whose flat landscape left an indelible impression on me, and I learned a lot about accurate, long-distance seeing, partly from the critical need to see potential enemy threat. But, the internalised long-distance seeing that I'm doing in the studio now has something to do with where I find myself at this juncture in life. I have experienced three epicentres; I grew up near Durban, South Africa (including, as a young adult, the years of political transition of the 80s and 90s), but also have strong German family connections to a particular area of Germany (Vogtland); and now I have lived in London for twenty-three years. There might be something about being high up to see how those things do and perhaps don't intersect. This has been, of necessity, an isolating experience, bringing me into sharp focus with myself … and with my Creator.

JA: Like an attempt to get your bearings?

WH: Yes, and a desire to explore how my earthly identity echoes and coalesces with my spiritual identity as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. The idea of seeing from the "highest place" which is God's rightful position in one's life (as in Jacob's dream), has been a thread running through my work since my student days.

It is however quite ironic for me to have a high-up studio because I'm quite scared of heights, but at the same time it reminds me of a watercolour painting I did in June 2020, *Icarus' Surrender*, depicting a helicopter whose pilot, like a modern-day Icarus has managed to escape not the island of Crete, but the earth's atmosphere itself. When the rotors become useless because of a lack of air, however, rather than the technology disintegrating (like Icarus' melting wings), the craft and its pilot surrender to the gravitational forces of heavenly bodies. The painting gives me the strange sensation of losing control and of losing one's roots and proper environment somehow, but there's a sense of liberation in that surrender at the same time. This is the space of art making, which for me has to be an adventurous act of faith. Neither God nor art allow us to feel too settled for long!

Walter Hayn, *Icarus' Surrender* (2020)

JA: This sense of the aerial with its insights and dangers seems to permeate much of your work. So many of the paintings that I'm looking at now, in your studio, have that feeling of being aerial views, and there is also a sense that different works are combining. In fact, you have combined some of them. It's almost as if you're piecing things together and constructing a more extensive and complex map …

WH: You know, I was just working on individual paintings. I think I just had a bunch of small-format canvases which I'd bought from the same shop, all the same size, and I just worked on them independently.

Many of them had biblical themes to start with, but later they became abstractions. I felt the need to constantly keep processing them and then it was almost as if the different canvases grew closer together, magnetically, and called to each other. As I was playing around pairing the paintings in different formations, linear marks on the edges were converging and then it seemed that they couldn't any longer exist apart from each other.

JA: It's fascinating. It's almost like a kind of geography emerging, and you're not orchestrating it. Like tectonic plates coming together purposefully and very naturally.

WH: Sometimes I get disillusioned with my work because of the slowness of it. But when things like this happen I realise that I'm on a journey, and that I've got to keep going and, bit by bit, allow it to come together of its own volition.

JA: About this journey … You talked about it just now as a journey that ends up being more effectively expressed in abstract terms – in non-literal terms – although of course the abstract forms of grids and crosses that keep emerging in your work embody and express the

absolute fundamentals of divine grace as this is understood in Christian contexts. No cross, no connection.

WH: The more I think about it, I reckon that the more my images have to do with the internal landscape that I find myself surveying, the more abstract they are but also the more visceral and energetic. I want people to feel what that inscape is like.

JA: It seems to me that the abstract marks register – or provoke? – internal force fields. We get a sense of where things are coming together and where things are breaking apart, where they are fitting and where they are not.

So abstraction in your work isn't a matter of Scripture becoming generalised and impersonal. It is actually about it becoming incredibly real. It's getting embedded in your inner life as structures and energies that are having effects. So maybe it is about the working of these truths in your being, and how they are functioning, and what they are rearranging, and how they are causing certain things to encounter each other? And that must be both an unnerving and a reassuring sensation. When you feel that there are all of these inner incompatibilities – and probably everybody feels this on certain levels. But again, it is the cross that unites without forcing connections between things. The bigger or more difficult the gaps, the bigger and more robust the cross becomes.

Walter Hayn, *Malta* (w.i.p.) (2021)

WH: Yes, just as the identity and nationality schisms we spoke about earlier are healed under the cross. Furthermore, we are confronted with the spiritual battle spoken of in Ephesians 6:12, that simply can't be boiled down to a single figurative image. My painting *Malta* (still a work in progress) started off as an overt depiction of that moment when the apostle Paul is shipwrecked on the island of Malta, gathers firewood and is bitten by a viper. But it is no longer very figurative. You can still see the fire somewhat, and the turbulence of storm waves, and … I have the feeling that Jonah and his fish could be in that distant sea … you know, that struggle, that internal struggle, and opposing forces just trying to take advantage of it. As I have grappled with the concept of the power of the cross at work in the situation, and with the threat of the Serpent reaching through the metanarrative of the Bible from the garden of Eden to its fiery destruction in

Walter Hayn, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (2021)

Revelation 21, the painting has become very layered.

It seems that our discussions of the studio as a high place, and what this means, also plunges us into the depths. The act of far-seeing is both an attempt to gain fresh perspective and new bearings but has also resulted in a necessary and repeated homing in on the inscape.

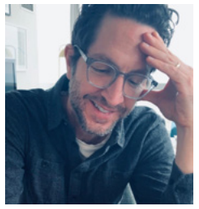
JA: Your work has developed these incredible, entangled, even embroidered surfaces. With these entangled works, you've stepped right into the scene, and it is also in you. So, there's entanglement and there's also the high place where you can start seeing how things are gathering and where they are converging – or not – and where the grace is. Your studio has enabled both kinds of ongoing perceptual shift.

WH: For me, the thing that pulls all of this together is that God is in all these places. Just as God is in the '"gentle blowing" voice, so he is with Jonah in the depths of the sea, and he is the eagle from Deuteronomy 32 who sees far and sees everything and bears us up with him.

Jorella Andrews researches and teaches in the Visual Cultures Department, Goldsmiths, University of London. She also works with Walter supporting artists in the church.

Please visit Instagram.com/walterhayn or walterhayn.com to see more of Walter's work.

LarsenOnFilm:
AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSH LARSEN ON FILM AND FAITH



Josh Larsen is the co-host of the radio show and podcast Filmspotting, author of *Movies Are Prayers*, and editor/producer for Think Christian, a website and podcast exploring faith and pop culture. He's been writing and speaking about movies professionally since 1994. You can connect with him on Facebook, Twitter, Letterboxd and his website. Jarrod Howard-Browne speaks to Josh about his work as a film critic and culture-commentator and the ways it intersects with his Christian faith.

Jarrod Howard-Browne: You've been writing professionally and writing about film for over twenty years now. What first drew you to writing and to film?

Josh Larsen: As I progressed in school, writing was one of the things I enjoyed the most and where I did my best work, so combining that with one of my passions – pop culture, and movies specifically – was a natural direction in which to head.

JH-B: I've heard you say that movies were a big part of your childhood, that going to the movies together was a family tradition, to the point where you'd hit the closest local multiplex to catch a movie even when on holiday. What are some of your old family-favourite movies? And what are some of your family's movie-watching practices that have most shaped you?

JL: I'm pretty sure seeing *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* in Toronto was one of those occasions. We could have easily seen it back home, but going to movies together was such a natural part of my family's rhythm that it made sense to do it while on vacation. As for family practices, Sunday afternoons were often spent watching a programme called "Family Classics" on a local television station, where they would introduce films like *The Adventures of Robin Hood* or *Swiss Family Robinson*. And of course watching Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel in the various incarnations of their movie-review television show was a staple of our Saturday nights.

JH-B: Is it safe to say that you've continued the tradition with your own family? If so, what are some of the ways you approach watching movies as a family today that may be helpful to other Christian families wanting to watch movies well together?

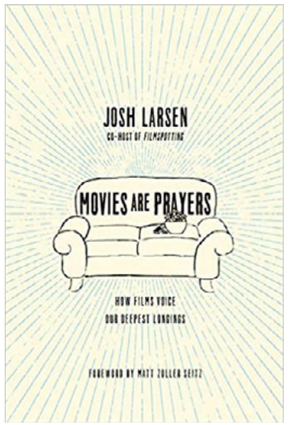
JL: Start young, with "safe," easily digestible stuff like Disney animation, but also silent film (kids love Keaton and Chaplin); black and white films; non-English-speaking titles (the animated works of Hayao Miyazaki, with subtitles, are a great way to do that). This way they'll experience and appreciate such things before they hear other kids calling them "boring." Most importantly, talk to them about what they watched, though not in a lecturing way, but by following their lead and interests. ("Who was your favourite character?" is a great starting question.) This way, as they branch out and begin watching things with more difficult content, including when they're not with you, you'll have already established a baseline for what makes a movie worthwhile and an understanding that they should not just be consuming, but thinking deeply about, what they're watching. As parents these days it's impossible to police everything

Hayao Miyazaki, *My Neighbor Totoro*

our kids watch, but we can inform how they go about watching it.

JH-B: The tagline for the online magazine and podcast Think Christian, of which you are the editor, is "No such thing as secular." Where does that tagline come from and how is it expressed in TC's work?

JL: I have to credit Steven Koster, who was the director of ReFrame Media (TC's parent ministry) when I was hired and was crucial in forming the vision for the programme. He tossed it off in an early meeting, and we all agreed it would make for a great tagline: a bit of hyperbole, perhaps, but also a succinct summarizing of our theological philosophy: that all of culture belongs to God, and relates to God's grand story in some way.



JH-B: In 2017 you published a wonderful book called *Movies are Prayers* in which you explore films as various expressions of prayer. What led you to write the book?

JL: The idea for it – that certain films can model prayers of praise, confession, lament, obedience, and more – was born at a time when I had been pulled off the movie beat at my newspaper and was looking for a creative, film-centric outlet. I wrote a bit here and there exploring the notion, then it really clicked during a press screening of Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*. During the "creation sequence," as it felt as if the first chapter of Genesis was washing over me, I realized the experience was akin to offering a prayer of praise during church. So it became a matter of thinking back on similar experiences I had at the movies.

JH-B: In the foreword to *Movies are Prayers* the well-known film critic Matt Zoller Seitz wrote: "A critic such as Larsen writes much more perceptively about what a film actually is, what it contains, what it says, than all but a handful of critics who don't carry the difficult responsibilities that spiritually-minded critics shoulder every day of the week." What difficult responsibilities do you think he is referring to and why do they potentially make you and spiritually-minded critics like you write so perceptively about film?

JL: Matt was very gracious to write that foreword. Perhaps he was suggesting that when you write for a Christian readership, as I do at Think Christian, there are particular concerns/connections that you're expected to make, which writers at more mainstream publications don't need to worry about? There is probably something to that, though I will say that we are blessed at Think Christian with a curious, grace-filled following that is less worried about the "dangers" of the pop culture we talk about and more interested in the ways it may help us understand God's world and our place in it. I will say – and this comes from someone whose first 15 years or so were as a critic in mainstream media – that I still find it difficult to do "Christian criticism"– respecting and elucidating the art on its own terms while also bringing relevant, theological reflection to my experience of it. I don't know if it's "harder," but I find it more challenging to do well.

JH-B: It's clear that your faith has informed and shaped your approach to film, but I am curious to know how film has conversely informed and shaped your faith?

JL: Honestly, it's hard to imagine my faith without it. I can read about things like sin, forgiveness, grace, and love in books of theology and even see them play out in the stories of the Bible, but they truly grip my heart when I see them captured on the screen in places and ways you would never expect. (Sean Baker's *Tangerine*, for example.)

JH-B: For the last 10 years you've been simultaneously working as editor of Think Christian and as co-host with Adam Kempenaar of the highly influential Filmspotting podcast. No doubt there is an overlap in the two audiences (I happily live in the overlap!), however it's also clear that there are some significant differences too. How do you approach doing film criticism for those different audiences? And what do you think each audience could learn from the other in terms of how they approach film?

JL: Audience is the key word. TC readers come to our website and podcast specifically for the theological reflection we can bring to pop culture, so that's what I try to offer. At Filmspotting, our listeners are expecting a more general perspective, though one offered in personal conversation, so that's what I hope to bring there. It's a matter of meeting the audience where they are. What one audience can learn more from the other, I'll leave for them to discover if they want to join you in the overlap!

JH-B: For the last four years you've been the host of the Ebert Interruptus event at the University of Colorado's Conference on World Affairs where you lead an audience through a multiday workshop examining a film frame by frame. What have been some of the highlights of hosting this event?

JL: It sounds simple, but just a greater appreciation for what the craftspeople involved in a feature film actually accomplish, from one frame to the next. I come away in awe at the creativity that went into movies I think I already know really well. And I feel unqualified to negatively criticize a film ever again.

JH-B: In an interview for the 2020 Critics Picks for the Chicago International Film Festival you mentioned sometimes being drawn to films that make you feel uncomfortable. Could you give us an example of a recent film like this, as well as say a bit more about why you think it could be a valuable experience to watch films that may make us feel uncomfortable?

JL: A lot of the time our discomfort comes from a lack of understanding, so film is a "safe" place to explore what it is about a place, time, or community that we don't fully understand. *Zola* made me deeply uncomfortable, but it revealed a lot about our performative instincts as humans longing for divine connection – especially in this age of social media, of which I'm as much a part of as the strippers in the movie, albeit in different ways. *Zola* ended up making my top ten list for the year.

JH-B: In 2017 you asked Paul Schrader, in an interview about his then recently released film *First Reformed*, what he wished Christian audiences would take away from watching the film. Ever since listening to that interview I've been desperate to ask: What would your answer be to the same question?

JL: If I remember right, he kind of dodged that one! And I get it – the best film makers don't want to talk about the "message" of their movie. I guess I would answer with what I took away from the film, as a Christian: encouragement to hang in there. Doubt is real and powerful and a life of faith is not easy, but even *First Reformed* would say that there is something greater animating this world that deserves our reverence and perseverance.

JH-B: Talking about *Movies are Prayers* you made the statement: "... we have to watch with grace. We have to accept that prayers can be unintended, that they can come from unbelievers, that even the howl of an atheist is directed at the God whom they don't acknowledge. In this way we can explore movies anew as elemental expressions of the human experience, as message bottles sent in search of someone who will respond ... God listens to the whispered utterances of the devotee in the pew, and he listens to our movies too." Do you think this kind of approach to watching film could apply to living and working as a Christian in other areas of life?

JL: I suppose it could. I'll admit it's easier for me to lead with grace when I settle into a movie theatre seat than when I'm in line behind someone boorish at the concession stand, but that latter scenario probably matters more in the grand scheme of things. I'll have to work on that.

JH-B: 3-by-3 rapid-fire questions:

- Who are 3 film critics you love to read?
  Pauline Kael, Roger Ebert, Dana Stevens.
- Who are 3 directors whose work you find yourself returning to?
  Wes Anderson, Joel and Ethan Coen, Hayao Miyazaki.
- What are 3 films you wish everyone would see?
  Rear Window, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Do the Right Thing*.

WHAT MAKES ART *"Redemptive"*?

MICHAEL R. WAGENMAN

Anyone who hangs around me long enough will eventually hear me congratulate a film for being "redemptive." This often brings a puzzled look to the faces of my friends. They thought the film was "entertaining" or "inspiring" or "informative" or "provocative." They want to know why I am so insistent that even the darkest or most violent of films strike me as "redemptive."

What makes any art "redemptive"? There's that famous quotation which one routinely finds on social media attributed to Martin Luther:

> The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays – not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship.

While many may agree with the sentiment expressed here, Frederick Gaiser has searched extensively through Luther's works and cannot find it anywhere. He did discover, though, that this quotation makes its first appearance in a devotional published in 1994 and distributed widely.[1]

Nonetheless, the idea has merit: art is not necessarily redemptive just because it is explicitly religious, evangelistic, or devoted to God. That may make it woodenly religious in sentiment but bordering on propaganda rather than art.

I recently found a new film on Netflix to be a great example of art that is redemptive. *Stowaway* (2021), written and directed by Joe Penna and starring Anna Kendrick, is the story of a mission to Mars that quickly turns into an ethical dilemma of the most urgent kind.

Within hours of launch but too far beyond Earth to return, the three-person crew discovers an accidental "stowaway." Now the dramatic tension enters the narrative, propelling the film's narrative of how very different personalities might work together to address the unexpected.

In the challenging environment of space travel, the crew's options quickly become anxiously limited. Will they choose faithfulness to the mission, self-preservation, care for the other, or solidarity? Each subsequent scene explores one option after another with mathematical rigour. Each crew member's unique point of view emerges until a heated battle of wills occupies centre stage, with death looming closer and closer for them all.

This becomes the ground from which each character's inner contradictions begin to grow. The scientist verges towards the irrational. The commander of the crew is tempted with abdicating responsibility. The doctor's Hippocratic commitment entertains death as a means to achieve life.

In an evocative flashback, one crew member recalls a childhood that contains an episode that parallels their mid-flight conflict. But it turns out to not be a conflict of wills but the inner conflict of one's own contradictory impulses: safety and security versus dangerous courage. The flashback contains the lesson – both then and now: unexpected strength often lies just beyond one's fears. Maybe now, with logic revealing a certain death, there is something possible that lies just on the other side of what appears impossible. Courage is required, though, because all one can perceive at the moment is what reason alone defines as the real.

Janna Prinsloo, *Exploring Outside of Time*

Here the dramatic – and even theological – centre of the film comes into view: is the dilemma the scientific challenges of space travel, the perspectival differences of working as a team, or the deeply personal battle within each of us to will courage rather than succumb to reason's facts? But what if the leap of faith ends in despair? What if the journey into the unknown, even propelled with courage, results in tragedy? What if life is pursued but death is the result? It is this juxtaposition, at the most fundamental level of human life, that gives the film's closing scenes its beauty within a grand and mysterious creation.

The reformational Dutch theologian, Hans Rookmaker, wrote in the introduction to his 1978 work, *Art Needs No Justification*, that "There is a contribution to be made to an age that is often anti-Christian in the most outspoken way." In films that I judge to be redemptive, I am often perceiving an artistic embodiment (routinely quite subtle and subversive) of the Bible's overall creation, fall, redemption narrative. Despite the "anti-Christian" forces within every society, there are always contributions that this redemption story can make. It is the role of the Christian to perceive and discern these contributions where they might be possible at any given time. This is the courage of faith: to offer these redemptive contributions trusting that they can be filled with meaning by the one Creator God who has made all things beautiful.

Stowaway displays the beauty of creation: a grand universe, human beings exercising intelligence and wisdom and love, and a commitment to exploring the many potentials God has woven into creation. But the film also knows what the fall means: the ever-present-ness of death, the human attempt to overreach our creational boundaries, and selfish commitments to personal safety instead of care for the neighbour. And yet there is a story of redemption that the eyes of faith can perceive even in the most extreme limits of human life: the open imagination that perceives more than the "facts," a willingness to risk and adventure into the unknown, and self-sacrifice for the life of the other.

So much of our global culture today is fixated on the security of one's self, position, ideology, or tribe. We have run the numbers; we have gathered the facts; all that remains is to make the calculation regardless of the human beings involved. It's the widespread disregard for human life and well-being in the service and worship of Mammon. In this kind of a world, a world still suffused with beauty because it is God's good creation, films like *Stowaway* are redemptive forms of art that whisper to us that there's another way to be human. This is their artistic contribution in a world always in need of redemption stories.

Dr Michael R Wagenman is Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Scripture Collective at the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology.

1. Frederick J. Gaiser, "What Luther Didn't Say About Vocation," *WW* 25, no. 4 (2005), 359–361.

Let Beauty Be Our Memorial

JOSH RODRIGUEZ INTERVIEWS THE COMPOSER J. A. C. REDFORD

If you've seen *Disney's Oliver & Company*, Pixar's *Wall-E*, DreamWorks' *1917*, or the James Bond film *Skyfall*, you've heard the work of our guest artist: J. A. C. Redford. His original music for film, TV and concert hall, and his orchestrations for Thomas Newman and the late James Horner have been played by leading ensembles including New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Israel Philharmonic, and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. If you're interested in a conversation about beauty and faith, you'll want to read the following excerpts from Josh Rodriguez's interview with J. A. C. Redford (via Zoom, January 21, 2021).

Photo: Robert Nease, Fullerton, CA

In 40 years of composing, do you have any favourite projects on which you've worked?

I don't … the reason is because each one is so unique, and they come with a set of relationships, and with a set of happy accidents and unfortunate accidents … That said … *The Trip to Bountiful* was a score that I was proud of. I enjoyed conducting *The Little Mermaid* … I enjoyed doing the *Mighty Ducks* movies … and my score for *Newsies* [the musical]. And then in the concert world, I've had a chance to work on some large works, for example, my Christmas Cantata *Eternity Shut In A Span*. Marlow Bradford and the Utah Chamber Artists did a spectacular job performing and recording that … and doing [*Homing*] the commission for American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) in 2017 which gave me a chance to work with a huge chorus and the Minnesota Orchestra with Robert Spano conducting, was a spectacular experience and a wonderful performance.

You've written lots of choral music. How do you approach this medium?

The voice is a wonderful instrument … it's our exhalation back to God who has inspired us – the word *inspiration* is to "breathe in." He has breathed the breath of life into us … and we breathe it back to him in the exhalation of our praise and our music … so the choral tradition is perfect for that.

How did your musical and spiritual journeys begin?

I grew up Mormon, and my family sang with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir … When I followed Christ out of Mormonism in 1984, it changed my faith and the terms of my faith. I took on a more historic and orthodox kind of Christianity, and I think it opened my eyes to a tradition of sacred music that I only saw a part of while I was a Mormon … So coming into the Christian world in the United States in the 80s, we ended up at an evangelical church, and had a wonderful music minister who actually conducted the [Brahms] *German Requiem* and Haydn's *Creation* with the church choir … I became very interested in setting texts from the Bible, and setting texts from poets who were writing responsive poetry to the Bible. Especially, I found that in English poets from the Renaissance to Gerard Manley Hopkins [in the 20th century], there was a treasure trove of texts available to set … I love poetry, and I have ever since I was a kid.

Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation*

How does your faith shape your art, and how does your music shape your faith?

I like the contrast of that question … because people don't often think about that. They think about how their faith shapes their music, but they don't think about it the other way around. One of the things that happened as I began to walk as a Christian, was that I really understood the sacramental point of view of life … [but] I didn't have the vocabulary for it at the time. I ended up in an Anglican church eventually, which did have a vocabulary for it. And I learned a lot there … The idea that the world is charged with the grandeur of God … that wherever we look, we see evidence of him. A lot of people understand how that works in nature, but don't understand necessarily as well, how that works through the works of art that man has created, [and] how that work is charged with the glory of God as well. I see him at work in a thousand men's faces, to use Hopkins' line, and in their works. And sometimes you see it in the works of composers who were avowedly not Christian or were avowedly atheist or agnostic. Their works speak louder than their words sometimes, and you actually hear the "stones crying out" (Luke 19:40) when you listen to their music and you realize that God has inhabited this in some way … I think there's an interplay between my music and my faith in a way that goes both ways. Setting a psalm to music is the best Bible study I've ever done … There is some kind of core within yourself or that indwells you, that helps you sift, almost like spiritual discernment, through your [musical] ideas to try and find the proper idea for that line of sacred text. And I think that's an exercise that is something to be thankful for as a composer, that we have the privilege of doing that.

What's your advice to Christians working in the arts?

There was an interesting observation in the book [*The Narnian*] that Alan Jacobs wrote about C. S. Lewis … He was talking about how Lewis didn't take the Christian ideas that he was trying to incarnate in a novel form and find ways of sticking them into characters. He had ideas that occurred to him that were story ideas completely apart from theology … Lewis didn't even plan on Aslan at the beginning, but he said at some point this lion bounded into the picture and he could never get it out. In other words, he was true to the story and to the characters. The thing that is encouraging about that for a Christian, is that … you have to dip the bucket down deep into the dark lake within you. And that can be scary because it's murky. It's dark, and sometimes it doesn't look like your church's statement of faith. But if you are a Christian, your confidence is that God promises to indwell you. So that whatever you pull up in that bucket, he's in it also. He's promised that he's at the very core of you. That's where he lives. So, if you trust that promise, whatever you dip that bucket down into and pull up, you're going to find him there somehow somewhere. So, if you write what you love, that too will come out.

Amadeo de Souza Cardoso, *Deaf Music*

Josh Rodriguez is composer-in-residence of the Corona Symphony Orchestra, and Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Composition at the Collinsworth School of Music, California Baptist University. Listen to his music here.

J. A. C. Redford's music can be heard at http://www.jacredford.com. His autobiography, *Welcome All Wonders: A Composer's Journey*, can be purchased online and at your local bookstore. For video interviews with JAC and other musicians, please visit Deus Ex Musica and the Deus Ex Musica YouTube Channel.

WIND-BLOWN ANSWERS:

PROTEST SONGS, ECCLESIASTES, AND OUR CHALLENGING TIMES

DAVID BELDMAN

My parents experienced the 1960s in their formative years and, like many their age, were captivated by the soundtrack of these tumultuous times. It may be that something passed through my mother's milk and got deep down into my DNA because I feel a strong attraction to the protest songs of the 60s; in reality, probably what nourished my affections for the music of this time was just the regular diet of tunes from vinyl records playing on our family turntable. I recently watched a YouTube video of Peter, Paul and Mary performing an absolutely beautiful (and haunting) cover of Bob Dylan's song *Blowin' in the Wind*. The three verses ask a total of nine questions which seem as relevant today as they were when Dylan (aka the "Bard") first penned them in the early 1960s. The chorus also expresses something that, these days, seems all too true: "The answer my friend, is blowin' in the wind; the answer is blowin' in the wind." We are still asking the same basic questions and the answers still seem all too elusive.

Intriguing to me is the resonance between the

Imre Ámos, *Aliga*

soundtrack of the 60s and the book of Ecclesiastes. The film *Forrest Gump*, much of which is set in the 60s and integrates the music of this era, seems like a 142 minute cinematic reflection on the book of Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes, the main character, Qohelet ("the Teacher"), is wrestling deeply and at length with the various questions, mysteries and incongruities of life, and for much of his journey resolution seems just out of reach. Qohelet probes the meaning and purpose of life, work and pleasure, he wrestles with injustice and the inequities of life, he struggles with the inevitability of death and how humans live in light of their own finitude. His is an honest and at times excruciating exploration into meaning and purpose.

Whatever answers he gains are hard won, and some questions remain a mystery. That the protest songs of the 1960s at times drew on and resonate with Ecclesiastes is not surprising – they are tapping into something that is certainly there in the book. Unsurprising too should be that the themes and questions of Qohelet in Ecclesiastes resonate deeply with our tumultuous times. Ecclesiastes is a book for our day.

How peculiar, then, that Christians do not typically tap into Ecclesiastes in this way. Of course, there are certain texts from the book that will pop up in Christian conversation: "There is a time and season for every activity under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1), "Two are better than one … a cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (4:9-12), "Remember your creator in the days of your youth …" (12:1), "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might …" (9:10), "There is nothing new under the sun" (1:9), "Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body" (12:12), "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again" (11:1). What often surprises me about Christian use of Ecclesiastes is just how disconnected the sayings we pull from Ecclesiastes are from the context in which Qohelet is saying them. And in many cases, I doubt Qohelet would approve of the way various bits and pieces get used today. We can learn something from the protest songs of the 1960s that honestly wrestle with the enigmas of life in the way that the book of Ecclesiastes does.

Anonymous, *Vanitas stilleven met boeken*

That said, the soundtrack of the 60s suffers from something that Qohelet himself suffered from and for that reason, although the music from this era may help us with articulating the enigmas of life, it by and large fails to offer an adequate solution. Qohelet tried with all his might and intellectual capacity to make

William Blake, *The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind* (detail)

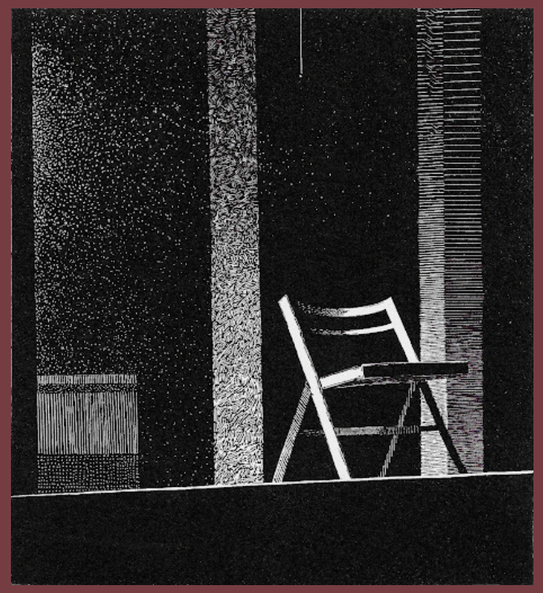
sense of the incongruities of life and eventually (at the end of his journey) came to the realization that starting with himself and his autonomous intellect and ability is inadequate to the challenges of life; he learned that the only possibility of navigating these mysteries with any success must start with fear and faith in God ("Remember your Creator …"). John Lennon's now classic song *Imagine* (1971) expresses a longing for a utopian world without hell or heaven, without countries, without possessions, without religion, a brotherhood of humanity living as one, living for today. What Qohelet realized is that a radical reorientation of the human person toward God is needed and not just better reasoning, or a change in attitude, or a shift in public opinion, or a collective dream of a better world. Many of the specific issues artists of the 60s were protesting did find some resolution but we are no closer to Lennon's utopia. The civil rights movement was in many ways successful, but racism still plagues our society and its structures; the Vietnam War eventually ended but unjust wars continue today; the end of the Cold War marked the end of the nuclear arms race between the US and the Soviet Union but international nuclear threat is still a reality. Of course the biblical story, with the eventual return of the Redeeming King, provides the ultimate answer to life's enigmas, but Ecclesiastes offers helpful instruction for navigating in these troubling times until that day.

Dave Beldman (PhD, University of Bristol) is an Old Testament scholar and Associate Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer College.

ORDINARY **SAINTS**

MALCOLM GUITE

The ordinary saints, the ones we know,
Our too-familiar family and friends,
When shall we see them? Who can truly show
Whilst still rough-hewn, the God who shapes our ends?
Who will unveil the presence, glimpse the gold
That is and always was our common ground,
Stretch out a finger, feel, along the fold
To find the flaw, to touch and search that wound
From which the light we never noticed fell
Into our lives? Remember how we turned
To look at them, and they looked back? That full-
-eyed love unselved us, and we turned around,
Unready for the wrench and reach of grace.
But one day we will see them face to face.



Peter S. Smith, *Stage Prop* (wood engraving)

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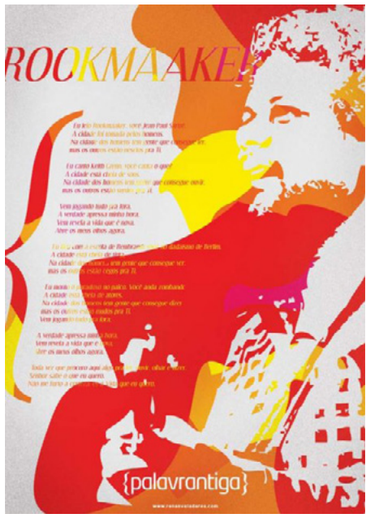
ROOKMAAKER AND HIS INFLUENCE *AMONGST BRAZILIAN CHRISTIANS*

RODOLFO AMORIM C. DE SOUZA

It was a rainy evening in Sabará, Brazil, in the year of 2010. At a historical theatre created in 1819 by the second Brazilian emperor, Dom Pedro II, hundreds of young Brazilians cry out to the band Palavrantiga, performing at the venue, for its most popular song, *Rookmaaker*. As the band answers the audience's cry, a choir of animated Brazilian Christians jump threateningly at the fragile historical venue and sing out loud the song's main verse: *"Eu leio Rookmaaker, você Jean-Paul Sartre"* (I read Rookmaaker, you Jean-Paul Sartre). The context of the presentation was an art festival (Art in Focus), gathering Christians of a wide denominational range, from many parts of the country, which included in its schedule serious reflections on the arts and their relationship with the Christian faith and an expected book launch of the Portuguese version of *Art Needs no Justification*, by Hans Rookmaaker.

Palavrantiga performing *Rookmaaker* (2010)



Rookmaaker lyrics

AN ART FOR LIFE IN CREATION: ROOKMAAKER'S WELCOME BY EVANGELICALS IN BRAZIL

The thought of Hans Rookmaaker has helped many Christians in Brazil, mainly evangelicals, to relate more openly and creatively to the gift of the arts without compromising an orthodox theological view. This latter fact is one of the main reasons for its influence amongst Brazilian evangelical Christians. That is so considering the Brazilian evangelicals' connected challenges of fundamentalism, with its tendency to subdue the arts to local church agendas and devotional concerns, and liberal theology, with its tendency to affirm the arts without an intentional concern for relating it to a centre of orthodox belief.

This short story may give us an idea of this curious phenomenon happening in Brazil since the time around 2010, when the life and thought of the Dutch academic Hans R. Rookmaaker started to acquire a growing influence amongst Brazilian Christians, becoming one of the main sources of reflection, nationwide, on the relationship between Christian faith and the arts. Since its first appearance in an article written in 2009,[1] the life and thought of Rookmaaker have featured increasingly in books, academic theses and articles, conferences and even the naming of a Brazilian art institution.

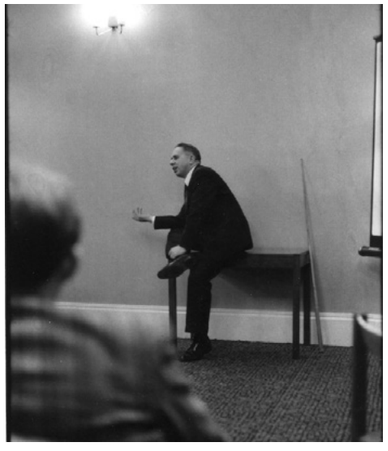
1. This article written by me was part of the collaborative book project: "Hans Rookmaaker e Missão Integral no Brasil" in *Fé Cristã e Cultura Contemporânea. Cosmovisão Cristã, Igreja Local e Transformação Integral* (Viçosa: Editora Ultimato, 2009). [Christian Faith and Contemporary Culture: Christian Worldview, Local Church and Wholistic Transformation]

Concerning the challenge of the fundamentalist tendencies of Brazilian evangelicalism – the fastest growing social group in Brazil[2] – with its clear limits on recognizing the public scope of Christian life, faith and theology: many Christians in Brazil find in Rookmaaker the first serious Christian orthodox reflection about the arts as a creational gift, to be cultivated and enjoyed responsibly by Christians and expressed in the wider culture. This broader horizon for the arts goes counter to the typical cultural anorexia of much of Brazilian evangelicalism, and is a point of increasing concern of the Brazilian cultural elites, who are mostly secularized.[3] The theme from Rookmaaker's reflections that probably penetrated most deeply in many Christians in Brazil is that art needs no justification as an aspect of life given and affirmed by the Creator and Redeemer of all things. Visual artists, musical bands, academic and church study groups, theatre and movie actors and many with other artistic backgrounds all over the country testify, now and again, that the main theological resource that first motivated them to move forward in culture was that which came from Rookmaaker's works. For a Brazilian evangelical, the recognition that art can be thought about and related to without compromising orthodox belief is a significant discovery, mainly for receiving the support from Christian pastors, leaders and church councils that tend, nationwide, to embrace and promote a rigid and tight Christian orthodoxy.

Poster for L'Abrarte conference at Natal, Brazil, 2012

As concerns the liberal challenge, the aesthetic thought of Rookmaaker is strategically fit to gain influence amongst evangelicals in a context of traditional theologically liberal dominance. Before the writings of Rookmaaker first appeared in Portuguese, the default reflection on Christian faith and arts in Brazil was "Tillichian" in its leanings, with a popular book on theology and Brazilian popular music having been written in 1998 with Paul Tillich as the theoretical framework.[4] Paul Tillich and his theory of culture and the arts enjoyed for decades a true hegemony in Protestant and evangelical academic circles in Brazil. Nevertheless, the broad recognition in the evangelical circles of his theological unorthodoxy contributed to widening the gap between theological reflection and the arts in the evangelical community in general. The aesthetic thought of Hans Rookmaaker has opened significant ways for Christians with a deep concern for orthodoxy to reflect and cultivate the arts in a coherent and integrated way.


Paulo Ritzel's choir at Art in Focus (2010)


Rookmaaker, mid-lecture

THE FUTURE OF ROOKMAAKER IN BRAZIL

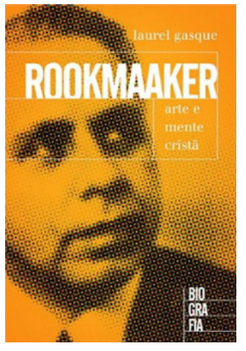
It's difficult to anticipate in any serious way the prospects for Rookmaaker's thought in Brazil. What can be said already is that any reflections on Christian faith and the arts in the Brazilian context already have Rookmaaker as one of its starting points. As said above, the main theme of Rookmaaker that has been helpful to many Brazilian evangelicals, artists and those who cultivate the arts in their lives, is his emphasis on the arts as a creational gift given by the Creator for the flourishing of his creatures. Rookmaaker's critique of modern art remains widely underdeveloped and unknown. Nevertheless, this maybe only reflects the superficial level of understanding and even interest of Brazilian Christians for the art produced by the *avant-garde* institutions and artists of Brazil, a phenomenon common to Christians and non-Christians in the country.

New translations and publications on the themes of art and faith are appearing and appealing to Christians in Brazil, including authors such as Calvin Seerveld and Jeremy Begbie from a Protestant background, Gregory Wolfe and Roger Scruton from a broad conservative background, amongst others. These publications are starting to have a readership amongst evangelical Christians looking for broader categories for understanding and cultivating the arts. Maybe the new insights brought by these new publications and their broader community of readers will relegate Rookmaaker to a more discreet presence amongst Brazilian Christians in the future, something even expected to happen. But surely the opening of the Brazilian Christian's mind to broader horizons for the arts in church and culture still has Hans Rookmaaker as its main inspiration and cause. And this is a position to be honoured and praised whatever the future of the Brazilian evangelical church.

NOTES

The Art in Focus festival happened in certain Brazilian cities from 2008 to 2011, exposing Christian artists and the Christian public in general to various art expressions produced by Christians and various reflections on the relationship between Christian faith and the arts.

The band Palavrantiga was the main popularizer of Rookmaaker in Brazil amongst Christians, but nowadays the number of Christian initiatives in the arts around the country that have Rookmaaker as a definitive influence are countless, from music artists such as Lorena Chaves and Marcos Almeida to visual artists as Elaine Nunes Covolan and Ana Staut, as well as art courses such as Arte & Espiritualidade and art events such as Arte e Prosa.
The institution L'Abrarte: Associação Rookmaaker para Estudos em Arte e Cosmovisão was developed by the art academic Paulo Ritzel in the city of Natal. Though paralyzed in its current activities, L'Abrarte was instrumental in introducing the first translations of Rookmaaker into Portuguese and promoting Rookmaaker's thought in Brazil.



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Souza, R. *Fé Cristã e Cultura Contemporânea*. Viçosa: Ultimato, 2009.

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Tillich, Paul. *Textos Selecionados: Paul Tillich*. São Paulo: Fonte Editorial, 2012.
Tillich, Paul. *Teologia da Cultura*. São Paulo: Fonte Editorial, 2008.
Calvani, Carlos Eduardo B. *Teologia da Arte*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2005.

Rodolfo Amorim Carlos de Souza has a Master of Arts in Sociology from UFMG and is co-founder of L'Abri Brazil and AKET (Kuyper Association for Transdisciplinary Studies).
You can listen to a version of *Rookmaaker*, featured in an ArtWay.eu article, here.

2. Research conducted in the year of 2020 by José Eustáquio (IBGE) concluded that the evangelicals will be the major religious group of Brazil by 2032, bypassing the Roman Catholic population. For the presentation and analysis of the data concerning this social phenomena, see "Evangélicos devem ultrapassar católicos no Brasil a partir de 2032," acessado em 05 de dezembro de 2021: https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/evangelicos-devem-ultrapassar-catolicos-no-brasil-a-partir-de-2032/.
3. For diverse interpretations of this cultural phenomena, see Andrea Dip, *Em nome de quem?: A bancada evangélica e seu projeto de poder* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2018); Davi Lago, *Brasil polifônico: Os evangélicos e as estruturas de poder* (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2018); Juliano Spyer, *Povo de Deus: Quem são os evangélicos e por que eles importam* (São Paulo: Geração Editorial, 2020).
4. Carlos Eduardo B. Calvani, *Teologia e MPB* (São Paulo: Loyola, 1998).

PREACHING THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH *Hebrews*

Victor Higgins, *Moses*

Gareth Lee Cockerill's ***Hebrews*** (New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, 2012) is both scholarly and pastoral. Grant Osborne called this commentary "a first-rate work that is both readable and very deep" and claimed that those who read it would "gain a fine understanding of this incredibly important epistle and its place in the life of the church." Cockerill's commentary makes a special contribution to our understanding of the shape and pastoral purpose of Hebrews and to the relevance of the author's Old Testament interpretation for the contemporary people of God. "Anyone planning to study, teach, or preach through Hebrews should have this commentary at their side" (*Denver Journal*).

Jon C. Laansma's ***The Letter to the Hebrews: A Commentary for Preaching, Teaching, and Bible Study*** (Cascade Books, 2017) is characterized by the balanced judgment that we have come to expect from its author. Laansma's interpretation of Hebrews is thorough, fresh, and pastoral without being idiosyncratic or superficial. This book may not address all the technical issues of the Greek text or interact with every competing interpretation, but it fulfils its title as A Commentary for Preaching, Teaching, and Bible Study. "Dr. Laansma has an intuitive grasp of the epistle's missional context and homiletical structure" (Philip Ryken).

Thomas R. Schreiner's ***Commentary on Hebrews*** (Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation, Holman, 2015) is an accessible interpretation of Hebrews by a well-known evangelical biblical scholar. Its unique contribution is the way in which Schreiner begins by showing how Hebrews fits into the larger biblical story. His development of various theological themes at the end is also helpful. This commentary "manages to bridge the gap between the academy and the church in such a way that it is at home in both" (from a review by Alan S. Bandy, Shawnee).

David G. Peterson's ***Hebrews*** (IVP, 2020) is a worthy addition to the Tyndale New Testament Commentary series. This volume provides us with a reliable interpretation of the text of Hebrews by a mature scholar known, among many other things, for his work on "perfection" in Hebrews. Each passage begins with a discussion of context and concludes with theological reflection. This is a solid meat, bread and potatoes commentary.

Grant R. Osborne with George H. Guthrie, ***Hebrews Verse by Verse*** (Osborne New Testament Commentaries, Lexham, 2021). This clearly written commentary is vintage Osborne. The theological significance and contemporary relevance of the text arise directly out of the author's adequately thorough, though not overly technical, exposition. We are indebted to George Guthrie, Osborne's former student, for completing this commentary after the author's death.

George Guthrie's ***Hebrews*** (NIV Application Commentary, Zondervan, 1998), though a bit older than most of the books mentioned in this article, is a valuable addition to the libraries of both pastors and scholars. The NIV Application Commentary has the stated purpose of explaining both the original meaning and contemporary significance of the biblical text. Guthrie's explanations of the original meaning are adequately thorough, and his discussions of contemporary application are relevant without being faddish. Keep an eye out for his forthcoming *Theology of Hebrews* (Zondervan).

William L. Lane's ***Hebrews 1–8*** and ***Hebrews 9–13*** (Word Biblical Commentary, Word, 1991) is another older work that deserves mention. Those with command of the original language will want to take advantage of Lane's rich exposition of the Greek text. Everyone, however, can read his "Explanation" section at the end of each passage or consult his shorter work, ***Hebrews: A Call to Commitment*** (Hendrickson, 1985). This shorter volume is a concise but accurate and readable exposition of Hebrews directed to serious lay people and thus useful for pastors as well.

Some may like Herbert W. Bateman IV and Steven W. Smith's ***Hebrews: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*** (Kregel, 2021). The Kerux Commentary series, of which this volume is a part, boasts the advantages of combining the skills of an exegete and a homiletician. This volume makes a point of explaining Hebrews within the context of Second Temple Judaism. However, the abundant reference to background material tends, at times, to overwhelm rather than elucidate the passage in question, and some of the suggestions for preaching are only superficially related to the text.

Dana M. Harris' ***Hebrews*** (B&H Academic, 2019) in the Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament is worth mentioning, although its focused dedication on a close reading of the Greek text distinguishes it from the other commentaries mentioned in this article. Harris, however, is not insensitive to theological issues and she provides an extensive bibliography on each passage. Nevertheless, this commentary is for those who want a close structural, syntactical, grammatical, linguistic (did I use enough adjectives?) reading of the Greek text.

Gareth Lee Cockerill's ***Yesterday, Today, and Forever: Listening to Hebrews in the 21st Century*** (Cascade Books, forthcoming 2022). This seven-week (forty-nine-day) reading guide is an excellent foundation for preaching or teaching Hebrews because it immerses its reader in this profound biblical book. Each passage is clearly explained in light of the pastoral purpose and rhetorical structure of Hebrews as outlined in Cockerill's NICNT commentary discussed above. This book helps us to see Hebrews as a living, breathing organism, rather than as an ancient artefact.

Herbert W. Bateman IV, editor, ***Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*** (Kregel, 2007). The way one understands the warning passages of Hebrews is closely tied to the way in which one understands the purpose and scope of the book as a whole. Thus, it is appropriate, in conclusion, to mention this volume that provides a clear presentation of the various options. Several of the contributors to this project (Bateman, Osborne, Guthrie, and Cockerill) have written books mentioned above. Buist Fanning is another contributor, whose position is fairly represented by both Schreiner and Peterson's commentaries.

Three things that we often forget when reading Hebrews:

1. Salvation and revelation are intimately related in Hebrews. It is by becoming the "Source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9) that the Son, seated at God's right hand, fulfils his role as the ultimate revelation of God.

2. Jesus' humanity is never discussed abstractly in separation from his deity. When the author addresses Jesus' humanity he is always talking about the eternal Son who has become human – about the incarnation. Thus, it is less than accurate to say that Hebrews 1:1-14 is about the Son's deity and Hebrews 2:5-18 is about his humanity. Hebrews 1:1-14 is about the Son's eternal deity and exaltation, while Hebrews 2:5–18 is about the incarnation of the eternal Son through which he has been exalted.

3. In Hebrews the earthly obedience of the Son of God has atoned for sin (5:7-9, 9:14, 10:5-10) and established a covenant that empowers the children of God for obedience. Consciences are "cleansed" (9:14) and God's law is written on the heart (10:14-18) enabling God's people to live faithful lives. Forgiveness is the door to obedient living.

Christ, the Eternal Priest-King by Lawrence OP under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

DOING POLITICS AS A PREVIEW OF

Christ's Kingdom

BRUCE RILEY ASHFORD

Over the past few decades, American politics has become something like the combination of a war, a carnival, and a Hollywood movie. It has been reduced to little more than theatrics and partisan combat. Because of this, many Americans have a negative view of the political sphere even as they participate in it through party activism, Facebook posts, and neighbourhood conversations.

Yet, the Bible's perspective on the political realm transcends the contemporary world of partisan disputes and political theatrics. Its treatment of the political realm goes deeper than party politics and presidential elections. More to the point, I wager that a significant number of American Christians have little or no grasp of what the Bible says about politics. That is a shame.

Georges Lacombe, *Blue Seascape, Wave Effect*

Often the method of choice for determining what the Bible says about politics is to look at passages that address the political sphere directly. Think Romans 13:1-7 or Matthew 22:15-22. The problem with this is it provides little insight into what politics actually is, according to God's creational design, and how it fits with his overall work in the world.

Therefore, a Christian's viewpoint should be one informed first by the Bible's master narrative, and the Christian should locate specific passages in this broader framework accordingly. In order to think well about politics and public life, we need to think well about God and his world as a whole. Richard John Neuhaus put it well when he wrote, "The first thing to be said about public life is that public life is not the first thing." Of course, party platforms and specific issues of public policy do matter. But policies should never be crafted, nor platforms constructed, in ways that are divorced from the bigger picture.

In any and every topic at hand for the Christian, we must go back before we can go forward. We need to locate politics within the true story of the whole world. That story is found in Christian Scripture and can be divided into four "acts," each of which speaks to politics in today's world.

POLITICS IN RELATION TO THE BIBLE'S FOUR ACTS

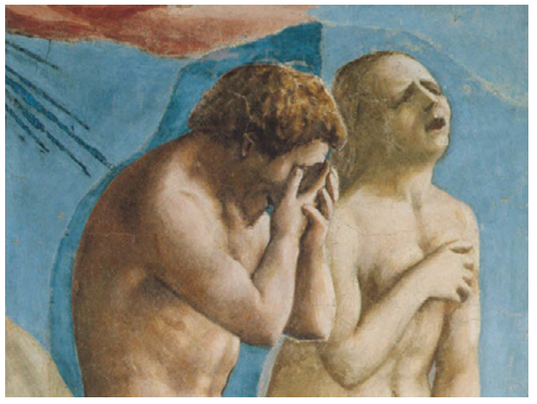
That story unfolds in the four-act narrative of Scripture.

In Act One God created the world, and he called it good. It was characterized by justice and universal peace, and was without sin or its consequences. Had the world remained untainted by sin, it would still be characterized by politics and public life, but the government would have no need to wield the sword.

In Act Two of the biblical narrative, God created the first couple, who immediately soured the whole picture by sinning. Through their sin, the whole world was corrupted. While the world remained structurally good, it became directionally corrupt, pointing humanity's worship toward idols rather than the one true and living God. Human beings now twisted God's creation toward wrong ends, introducing injustice and human violence into God's good world.

In Act Three, God responded by sending his Son, who was crucified and resurrected to extend his salvation and to break the "curse" that sin and death had on the world. Through his sacrificial death and resurrection, we may be saved from our sins, and be set free from its curse, to live the sort of life that pleases God and contributes to the public good.

Act Four closes out the narrative by pointing forward to the return of the King who will make all things right again. When he returns, he will institute a new political



Masaccio, *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (detail)

community, centred in a new city – the New Jerusalem – once again characterized by justice and shalom.

As Christians, we live "between the times" of Act Three and Act Four. Christ has already inaugurated his kingdom but has not yet consummated it. As such, we cannot ignore his kingdom (as if he had not already inaugurated it), but neither can we usher in his kingdom (as if he were not going to return to consummate it himself). Instead, we are called to live as a preview of his coming kingdom. We want our engagement in politics to help redirect our society toward a God-inspired and God-directed vision of public justice and societal flourishing. When we recognize God's ultimacy in politics and public life, we not only avoid deifying any created good – such as liberty, tradition, equality, progress, or the nation – but we also avoid the deleterious political consequences of such false worship.

POLITICS AS A PREVIEW OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

Many evangelicals are pessimistic about their ability to influence what appears to be an increasingly post-Christian society. A rising number of Americans consider traditional Christian teaching antiquated at best and reprehensible at worst. Russell Moore wrote that "many of the political divisions we have come down to this: competing visions of sexuality as they relate to morality and the common good." Evangelical Christian doctrines of creation, sin, salvation, judgment, and personal morality are now not only rejected but weaponized against us.

Fortunately for Christians, our faith has never required that we hold positions of power or cultural privilege. Christianity, more than any other faith, is uniquely fitted to navigate the complex challenges of being a minority view in a plural society. In fact, Christianity has never been more itself, more consistent with its roots in Jesus himself, than when it stands as a prophetic minority in a culture of pluralism.

As a prophetic minority, we are free to promote our vision of the good life, and to do so with clear lines and bright colours. We need not flatten out our vision into some sort of civil religion or system of values. Russell Moore is worth quoting in full:

> The church now has the opportunity to bear witness in a culture that often does not even pretend to share our "values." That is not a tragedy since we were never given a mission to promote "values" in the first place, but to speak instead of sin and of righteousness and judgment, of Christ and his kingdom. We will now have to articulate concepts we previously assumed – concepts such as "marriage" and "family" and "faith" and "religion." So much the better, since Jesus and the apostles do the same thing, defining these categories in terms of creation and of the gospel. We should have been doing such all along.

Indeed, Christians now have the opportunity to promote a vision of the good life that is based on creation's God-given order and on the gospel. We have the opportunity to introduce society to God's vision for human life – a vision of marriage, of family, of sex, of money, of power, of justice, peace, and unity in diversity – that stands in sharp contrast to the zeitgeist. The darker our society becomes, the brighter the gospel light will shine.

Aristarkh Lentulov, *The Vault of Heaven*

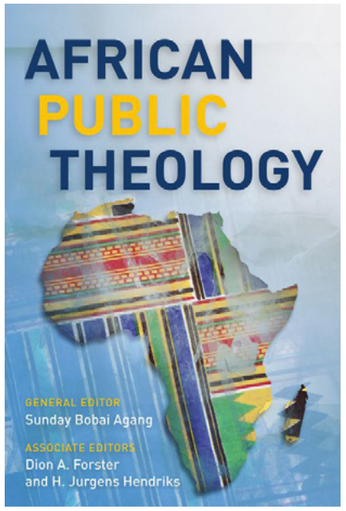
Bruce Riley Ashford is Senior Fellow at the Kirby Laing Centre and is author of nine books, including *Letters to an American Christian* (B&H, 2018), *The Gospel of Our King* (Baker, 2019), and *The Doctrine of Creation* (IVP, 2020).

BOOK REVIEW:

African Public Theology

by Sunday Bobai Agang, and Dion A. Forster, H. Jurgens Hendriks, eds. (Carlisle: Langham, 2020).

REVIEWED BY FR PIERRE GOLDIE



"The joy and hope, grief and anguish of the men (*sic*) of our time, especially of those who are afflicted in any way, are the joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the followers of Christ as well." This quotation matches the sentiment of the editor, Agang, who observes a suffering Africa, people who "groan as they struggle to survive" imprisoned by a multitude of oppressive forces which cannot be resolved via the resources of African Traditional Religion. In this compilation, the Christian church, with sound theology, looks deeper into the situation of rapid growth of Christianity in Africa, in contrast to so much suffering, with a clear understanding that handouts are not enough. We need to groan alongside the people and move to solutions based on the dialogue of Scripture and real life, not merely for the biblical categories of poverty and illness, but the whole range of human life, including education, business, science, entertainment, technology, artificial intelligence.

This anthology aims to rediscover the African identity in the light of Scripture and the African context, to transform and to repurpose African society for the glory of God, and to do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven (xv), reflecting a profound concern for Africa, the Africa that God wants. It seeks to empower the church to be an instrument of change, discovering how God wishes to interact with creation and accompanied by the bold entry into the secular field, the public arena, believing that all life issues (science, politics, economics, etc.) are intended for God's glory.

The volume is penned by 29 authors from different parts of Africa, with strong representation from Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa (including many associated with the University of Stellenbosch), either with doctorates or doctoral candidates. These African authors are not hesitant to pinpoint Africa's problems, including bad governance, corruption, injustices, and ethnic conflicts. The secular life is not an ethically neutral zone, to be ignored by the Christian church, which seeks to oppose all that undermines human dignity.

This coheres with the trend to move from privatized, individualistic morality to the wider arena of structural sin, sin embedded in the structures of society, and a church which cannot remain on the sidelines. Christ needs to be incarnated into all aspects of life, or risk irrelevance, as the fruits of the latter neglect have already marginalized Christianity in the West. African Christians are asked to "get their hands dirty," to enter the problematic world which needs transformation.

This compilation represents a courageous entry in existential areas of life which have been neglected by traditional Christian theology. The editors are to be applauded for drawing the substantial effort of many African scholars into the field of public theology. The volume is both a general resource for approaching public theology and a realistic engagement with the real problems of Africa, and illuminates these quandaries as a basis for further research. A wide range of topics is presented, clearly a stimulus to scholars who wish to enlarge on these chapters. Perhaps one omission is the absence of engagement with African Traditional Religion and culture, and its relationships not only with Christianity, but also as an ongoing force to be reckoned with, in the postmodern world, which itself affects all cultures. The volume is surely a catalyst to further research and realistic solutions.

Fr Pierre Goldie is the parish priest at St Raphael Catholic Church, Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

1. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes (Church in the Modern World)*, Dec 7, 1965, Chapter 1:903 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello, 1988), 903-1001.

Photo: Julia Skeen

Chris Mann

1948-2021

MICHAEL SHIPSTER

It is a paradox that while poetry in most languages is venerated and sits at the peak of literary achievement, it rarely finds a mass readership. Poetry books don't sell, poetry readings are sparsely attended; poets tend to be poor. For the poet Chris Mann, who died last March, aged seventy-two, being South African was a further mixed blessing. While South Africa's tortured history, rich culture and natural beauty were his life-long inspiration, the international ostracism of the apartheid régime, including the arts, prevented all but a handful of South African writers – Paton, Gordimer, Fugard, Coetzee, for example – from reaching an international readership. Even after South Africa opened up following Mandela's election as president in 1994, the tidal wave of political and social

change that followed tended to sweep aside the inclusive, tolerant visions of liberal white writers like Mann, who then struggled to be heard even in their own land.

My friendship with Chris began fifty years ago with a chance meeting in the quad of St Edmund Hall, Oxford, where we were both students. Although only three years older than me, he seemed much older, almost of a different generation and I held him in some awe. A Rhodes scholar, graduate of Wits University, veteran of student protests against apartheid, he had completed national service in the South African Navy, spent a year in the US as part of the American Field Service programme and was already a published poet.

Chris Mann outside the library, St Edmund Hall, Oxford, 1971

As I got to know him I discovered that poetry was not something he did in his spare time, it was already his life's vocation. While I was an averagely hedonistic, disorganised undergraduate, he had already embraced a strict work ethic to which he stuck for the rest of his life. He rose early, his mornings were sacrosanct, devoted to his writing. I sometimes thought that if our ancient fire trap of a college staircase caught fire Chris would rather continue his hunt for that elusive word or rhyme than grab a fire extinguisher, or even try to escape.

I remember once taking him to my hometown in England, where I had the use of a sailing dinghy. The morning was perfect for sailing and I suggested we leave right away or we would miss the favourable tide. He looked at me as if I had suggested we rob a bank. "I'm sorry, I'm working on something," he said. "Could it wait till this afternoon?" In vain did I protest that time and tide wait for no man. Not even for Chris Mann the Poet.

Even in later life, when he had developed a strongly Christian outlook, he was seldom able to attend morning services. He worked through family holidays, Sundays, Christmas Day, on the morning of a friend's funeral, even his own wedding day.

He loved his time at Oxford – the buildings, traditions, the company of learned teachers and students, the opportunity to immerse himself in the literature of the entire world, from Homer and Dante, George Herbert, Donne, his beloved Keats, Blake, Hopkins, Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost to the present. The list is deliberate: these were his most important influences, reaching for the divine through imagery drawn from the ordinary, the natural world and the cosmos. When, in his final year he was awarded the Newdigate Prize for Poetry, (previous winners included Ruskin, Arnold, Wilde, Huxley), he could believe his own work had achieved acceptance and he had found his spiritual home.

As students, talking late into the night, I found it disconcerting that he seemed to be taking mental notes. One risk of being Chris' friend was that you might later appear in one of his poems. As a poet he was never off duty; he was interested in everyone and everything. He was always watching, listening, observing, trying to understand. He always had a poem on the go, waiting to be born.

He saw it as his mission to use the power, precision and economy of poetry to reveal the world in all its banality, horror, glory, or mystery: a row of potatoes ("their offspring/ like thumb-sized moles/suckle in a womb of earth/a tangle of strings"); the State murder of his friend Jeanette Schoon in Angola ("But language … can only gesture, patchily at a/ room in shambles, the rafters smoking, freak-/mangled chairs, the hair-tufts, flesh/-bits, your infant's …"); a dragonfly on a hot rock by the Zambezi ("Your lineage is as old as coal,/your life in the swirl of stars,/a twitch of plasma on a reed"); Christianity and faith ("I saw – sailing through the morning mist/as if through time, your long-hulled ship of stone./That's when I knew my sturdiest gift for you/ would be to raise, in phrase on measured phrase/the small cathedral of a faith-built poem,/made in and out of words, and love, in time");
and on love and family ("And when, growing wiser/you see our imperfections/the frail glasswork of our dreams/remember this: the night/the stars, this blue-quilted bed/ were wondrous to your parents./You were conceived in love").

Wedding Day, 1981

After Oxford, Chris studied Zulu and African Studies at SOAS, followed by a teaching post in Swaziland, where he became fluent in Zulu, and a lectureship in English at Rhodes University in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown). It was here that he met Julia Skeen, a postgraduate student whom he married two years later. Julia brought a light-heartedness and capacity for joy into Chris' life, acting as an antidote to his tendency to introspection and melancholy. Her artwork was a natural partner for his poetic images, especially of the natural world, and she illustrated some of his published works.

In 1980 Chris departed from the poetic stereotype when he became Operations Director at the Valley Trust in KwaZulu-Natal. This took him away from academia and closer to the practical needs and challenges of rural development among the poorest of South Africa. After their daughter Amy was born, followed by Luke, family life became an anchor for Chris' poetic sensibility, a haven of love and stability that sustained him to the end of his days. In turn, Chris was a loving and morally grounded husband and father, keen to impart his values and learning to his children.

During this period, he began to turn to music to showcase his poetry and reach a wider audience, co-founding a band Zabalaza with Zulu musicians which performed to mixed audiences around the country and on national television. One of the biggest gigs of his life was in 1990 when he performed his poem *Till Love is Lord of the Land* in front of a crowd of over 100,000 at a rally in Durban to welcome Mandela after his release from prison.

Chris performing *Till Love is Lord of the Land*. February, 1990

In 1995 Chris moved back to Makhanda to become Professor of Poetry at Rhodes. During the following 20 years he founded and ran Wordfest, a multilingual literary festival which became an integral part of the annual National Arts Festival, seeking to develop indigenous South African literary talent across all its languages. His poetry was adopted for study in the national secondary school curriculum and he developed a following for his live performances in schools and theatres, with Julia providing the images.

After Oxford, despite mostly living in different continents, our friendship remained strong. In 1972, Chris introduced me to his sister Jackie during my first visit to South Africa from Botswana. When Jackie and I were married in Gaborone the following year, Chris and I became brothers too.

In 2020 Jackie was diagnosed with untreatable breast cancer after an already long illness. This hit Chris hard especially since COVID-19 restrictions and his own cancer treatment prevented him from visiting her before she died. Earlier in 2021, after his condition deteriorated rapidly, I travelled to South Africa to be with him and Julia at their home in Makhanda. I was fortunate to be able to spend a few days with him while he was still able to communicate and was at his bedside with his family when he died.

After his death, tributes poured in from friends, colleagues and admirers not only in South Africa, but from around the world. He would have been pleased and surprised to receive so much praise and appreciation. The messages mentioned the magnitude of his poetic vision, his compassion and the skill and sensitivity with which he was able to express the most complex concepts and emotions.

It often takes time after an artist's death for their contribution and achievement to be fully recognised. I believe that Chris' following and reputation will grow, and he will achieve recognition not just as a South African poet who navigated his artistic path in difficult and conflicted times, but as a unique voice addressing universal themes, relevant to all.

As for me, I have lost an irreplaceable friend and influence on my life. But the memory and the love, as well as the poetry, will live on.

Hamba Kahle, Chris!
(Go well, Chris!)

Michael Shipster is a retired British diplomat, whose overseas postings included the Soviet Union, India, South Africa, and the United States. He lives in Winchester.

Chris Mann's poetry may be viewed here: http://www.chrismann.co.za/home/

PROFESSOR CHRIS *ZITHULELE* MANN

MBONGENI MALABA

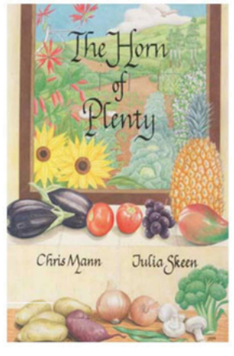
Photo: Julia Skeen

Professor Chris Mann was a remarkable man who contributed to the country he dearly loved in so many different fields. A distinguished scholar, he was shortlisted for the prestigious Professor of Poetry post at Oxford University. He was one of the limited number of people who could be regarded as a Renaissance man: apart from his talent as a poet, he was a keen musician who used his voice and guitar to present poetry to a broad-based audience, including some who, ordinarily, might not have engaged with the genre. Together with his wife, the accomplished artist, Julia Skeen, they collaborated on a number of projects, including a visit to Pietermaritzburg in 2016, which was part of their roadshow foregrounding literature, at Hilton College; arts and culture at a joint performance at the Tatham Gallery which featured music and a slide show drawn from their fascinating publication, along with Adrian Craig (a Professor of Zoology at Rhodes University) titled *Lifelines*: "The book embodies recent discoveries in the fields of evolutionary biology, palaeontology and astronomy. These discoveries, when taken together, reveal how each animal is part of a lifeline that stretches back billions of years and is inseparable from the genesis of the cosmos as a whole." The stunning artistic background showcases Julia Skeen's accomplishments as an artist. Their work celebrates the bounty of nature, as reflected in the exquisitely written and beautifully illustrated, in colour, *The Horn of Plenty,* which brings to mind Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, "God's Grandeur," the opening of which reads "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." His faith anchored his thought and actions. Chris and Julia's multimedia skills were demonstrated at The English Academy of Southern Africa Awards Ceremony hosted by Amazwi (which incorporated what was once known as The National English Literary Museum), where besides their display of several copies of Chris' books, they streamed clips of some of their productions. He also performed some of his poems.

Prior to joining Rhodes University, Chris Mann worked for The Valley Trust in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, in what is now known as KwaZulu-Natal, through which he and other participants explored ways that would enable the people in the area to improve their lives, with special emphasis placed on enhancing their agricultural knowledge and productivity; foregrounding land husbandry and rural development. They also manufactured environmentally friendly household products. Chris also set up a popular band.

One of his endearing qualities was the ease with which he could converse with a wide range of people: fluent in isiZulu and isiXhosa, Chris communicated warmly with local farmers; he readily engaged with school children who visited the community to learn what could be achieved when people treated each other with dignity and respect; his lectures at schools were enthusiastically received; he was a gracious convener of Wordfest, which generally takes place annually at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) and delivered numerous erudite papers at local and international conferences.

Siyabonga umsebenzi wakho, Zithulele.
(We are grateful for the work you have done, Quiet One)



Mbongeni Malaba is a Professor of English Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

THE VIRTUES OF *Cricket*

DAVID MCILROY

Cricket is a sport whose rules are famously difficult to explain, but easy enough to comprehend when playing the game. Cricket is something which has to be experienced to be understood. One of my fondest memories is of a game played just before my wedding, in which one of my French friends took the winning catch in his first ever match. Writing an article of general interest about cricket is therefore a folly.

Cricket is a game in which individual battles take place in the context of a contest between two sides. Two batters take the field, attempting to score runs against the bowlers from the other team. The other nine batters wait their turn. Some players on the other side will be bowlers, one will be the wicket-keeper, but up to six will simply be waiting to catch the ball if the batter hits it in their direction.

Vanity Fair print, *English Cricket*

Cricket teaches the necessity for a balanced team. Rare indeed is the individual who is equally talented as a batter and as a bowler. Sir Garfield Sobers (WI), Imran Khan (PAK), Jacques Kallis (SA) and Sir Ian Botham (ENG) were players who could do everything, but most captains have to choose a team made up of different skills in order to win the match. Some batters must have the ability to score quickly; others must be able to bat for long periods of time. Some bowlers should be able to bowl fast; others should be able to make the ball spin or swing. A captain who picks a team who all have the same outlook and aptitude will not be a successful captain.

Cricket needs patience. Even the shortest form of the game lasts three hours, and most amateur cricket takes up an entire day. Batters must be patient, waiting for their turn to bat. Bowlers must be patient, knowing that most balls will not take a wicket. But patience has to be balanced with alertness. At any moment the ball may come flying towards a fielder who has been standing idly by for twenty minutes or more.

Cricket requires humility. One mistake can bring the end of a batter's innings. The fielders must field where their captain tells them, even if it means standing somewhere where they are unlikely to have anything to do for extended periods of time. A fundamental rule of cricket is that you don't argue with the umpire. That takes discipline. But unless that rule is observed the game becomes unpleasant, if not impossible, to play.

Cricket is a game which requires courage. It is played with a hard ball. Batters risk being hit as the ball is bowled at anything from 50 to 90 mph from a distance of just 22 yards. Fielders are in danger of breaking their fingers if they do not catch the ball properly.

Cricket demands honesty. The expectation is that a batter who has hit the ball and is caught out will leave the field even before the umpire has made their decision. A fielder who fails to stop the ball before it crosses the boundary will tell the umpire. Fair play and the spirit of cricket are not just social conventions, they are key to what makes the game enjoyable.

I am anything but a technically accomplished cricketer. But I love the game. It is an opportunity to stand outside, often in the sun, doing something for the joy of itself and to the glory of God. I could spend an eternity sharing the beauty of cricket with you; you've got to try it.

Dr David McIlroy is Chair of Trustees at KLC. He is a practising barrister and author of *The End of Law: How Law's Claims Relate to Law's Aims.*

Cricket Match Played by the Countess of Derby and Other Ladies

BASEBALL AND THE *Meaning of Life*

KYLE RAPINCHUK

As an American, I am not always privy to what outsiders think of our country. When the opportunity arises to speak to someone from another country, I occasionally ask what their country thinks about America. The answers are varied, as one may expect. When I ask about their own country, I learn many fascinating differences in culture and values. I also almost universally learn that football (what we Americans call soccer) is a unifying feature of the nation. Whatever other challenges face a nation, the nation gathers together in support of its national football team. For Americans, our defining legacy in the sports world has always been baseball. But beyond our national spirit, baseball also teaches a more universal and lasting lesson. In this essay, following the model of the great British author G. K. Chesterton's *Tremendous Trifles*, I parse meaning for the Christian life from the wonderful game of baseball. Baseball, in all its beauty, but especially in its pace of play, reveals to us the dangers of the American pace of life.

Medieval Baseball in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

The pace of American life has become polarized – non-stop busyness defines our work and family life, then any time off is spent gazing passively into a screen. We make no time in American life for introspection; no time to reflect and change for the better; precious little time for genuine human friendship. This lifestyle, I believe, is the greatest threat to the future of baseball – and flourishing in American society. Baseball has spent at least the last decade fending off the criticism that the pace of play is too slow. Games now take on average over three hours and people don't have the time for such dawdling. With increasing frequency, people tell me baseball is boring and lacks excitement. Such a criticism seems almost inevitable for a culture that demands no silence, no moment of waiting without a smartphone screen, and then collapses into subhumanness in front of a screen instead of getting much needed sleep, time for contemplation, and genuine rest.

But baseball is not the problem – our schedules are. Baseball, in fact, is the solution. The pace of baseball, I propose, ought to be the pace of our lives. The moments in baseball that seem boring to most are in fact the most profoundly important moments of the game. Take, for instance, the time between pitches. One proposal in recent years to shorten baseball games is to create a pitch clock, similar to the shot clock in basketball. Since an average MLB baseball game now sees around 295 total pitches, one second saved per pitch would save up to five minutes of game time! But the more important factor is not in saving five minutes – we would be much better people if we accepted that most of a baseball game is the time spent between pitches – rather, we ought to use our time to reflect on the meaning of this time "in between."

Every pitch starts with a decision. The pitcher and catcher must agree upon a pitch to throw lest chaos (and likely

Roberto Clement statue is licensed by daveynin under CC BY 2.0

injury) ensue. The dynamic between a pitcher and a catcher alone could serve as the source for a book, but here I'll only emphasize that the decision is a mutual one, even if one exerts more authority in the decision than the other. Once the decision is made, the pitch is executed. The batter now has the responsibility of decision making. Should he swing or not? That decision is made in an insanely miniscule 0.4 (or less!) seconds. Upon decision, the hitter must decide how, when, and where to swing based on his identification of the pitch's initial location, speed, and rotation. Somehow a rounded bat must meet a round ball in a precise location at a precise time for any chance of success. The ability of a hitter to execute his task seems infinitely harder than the pitcher's, which is why Hall of Fame players are only successful at reaching base 3.5 or 4 times out of 10. All this is fascinating to me.

But next, after the pitcher and batter have made their decisions and executed their tasks to the best of their ability, another pitch is thrown. In the interim between pitches is not the boring addition of wasted seconds, but the whole meaning of life. Depending on the result of the pitch, one or both players often recognize their own failure: a missed location, giving up a base hit, a poor swing, a failure to swing at a hittable pitch, or a dozen other regrets. Upon recognition of this failure, the player is given the necessary time to reflect and repent. The player can alter his plan and his attitude, make an adjustment, and repent of his misjudgement, lack of execution, or failure to succeed. Having repented, the player may now take a breath and reorient. Having repented of doing poorly, the player may now reorient himself to a successful outcome on the next pitch. Having reoriented to the goal, the player must refocus by visualizing successful outcomes and removing distractions to his task. With that, the players repeat the decision process and do it again.

Recognize. Reflect. Repent. Reorient. Refocus. Repeat. This is the boring part of baseball, but it proves to be the meaning of life, especially for the Christian. Recognize our failure. Reflect upon how we got there. Repent of our sin. Reorient to Christ. Refocus on our Christian vocation. Repeat. Again, and again, and again. And yet, we so often fail to live the Christian life in this way because of the busyness of our lives. We lack a Sabbath; we lack times of reflection and contemplation; we don't pray. What if instead of trying to fix baseball, we started letting baseball fix us. What if, instead of filling every boring moment of life with social media, "news," and noise, we decided to fill those silent moments with the rhythms of baseball – recognize, reflect, repent, reorient, refocus, and repeat. Perhaps if we lived our lives like a game of baseball, we might remember that the goal is for as many of us as possible to reach home.

Dr Kyle Rapinchuk is Associate Professor of Christian Worldview at the College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri, USA.

Fletcher Charles Ransom, *Out at Home*

Grace

IN A SIP?

TEENA DARE

Is there anything that the world needs more than a sip of God's gratuitous grace? An invitation to a sacred meeting to just be together, God with us. To sit and sink into a single moment, forsaking today's work and tomorrow's worries.

In a world where it feels like we've lost our centre of gravity, perhaps it's time for followers of Christ to invest in learning the timeless art of crafting cocktails. The kind of drinks that make us stop and feel the grounding force of God's generous hospitality.

Archibald Motley, *Cocktails*

Some of us may be called to abstain from alcohol to honour our own limits or of those around us … or perhaps to embody a different way of life. There is a growing market for zero ABV (non-alcoholic) spirits for those who are looking to cultivate this form of hospitality without consuming alcohol. I was a bartender throughout my first pregnancy and I mastered the art of mocktails!

For others though, wholesale prohibition isn't the answer to our culture's overconsumption. A hand-crafted cocktail has redemptive potential – encouraging us to enjoy the gifts of creation mindfully, with gratitude.

Creating and enjoying a cocktail is an entire sensory experience. The best are works of art: vibrant colours, imaginative garnishes, delightful glassware, delightful mouthfeels, evolving flavours. They intoxicate all of our senses, summoning us back to our bodies to taste and see that the Lord of all creation is good.

This can be a powerful way for us to exit the expansive arc of emails and updates to practise presence with God, his world and one another.

The preacher in Ecclesiastes didn't have an iPhone but he seems to know the disorienting reality of "life under the sun." He searches far and wide for something to hold onto. But all of life slips through his fingertips like a vapour.

What is his grand conclusion? On what ground does he find his footing? Is it on the stability of a tightly-knit theology or the traditions of his ancestors? The pursuit of progress? Not quite. The preacher's grounding anthem goes, "So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?" (Eccl 2:24-25)

No matter how hard we try to chase meaning, it remains true that we are creatures of God. We are called to receive from the hand of our Father and try to find joy in his gifts – the gifts of work, food and drink.

So why not cultivate contentment through cocktails. Through the intimate connection with ingredients and guests that can root us in the love of God right in our midst, the life-giving blessings of a Creator who rejoices over his creation and invites us to do the same.

A glimpse of restored humanity in a fallen world.

Teena Dare spent years as a bartender which launched her into a life of studying, writing and thinking at the intersection of faith and culture. She and her family live in Carlsbad, California.

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