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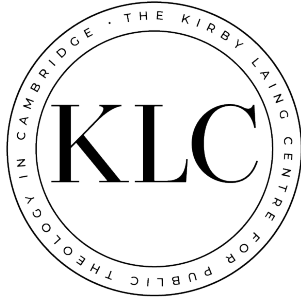
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The Big Picture is produced by the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge, a nonprofit academic research centre whose vision is to foster Christian scholarship and public theology, rooted in spirituality and practised in community, for 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? For more see our website, kirbylaingcentre.co.uk.

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

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“SO WHETHER YOU *EAT OR DRINK* OR *WHATEVER YOU DO*, DO IT ALL FOR THE *GLORY OF GOD.*”

————— Craig G. Bartholomew

This verse from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is well known. However, I suspect we easily gloss over the “eat or drink” part, relating it to what we see as really important, perhaps matters like reading our Bibles or praying or evangelising.

Those at Corinth would not have done so because the issue of food offered to idols had become controversial there (1 Cor 10). But nor would any Old Testament believer or Jew. Right from Genesis 1:29–30 and 2:9 food is on the biblical menu, as it were, and amidst the many laws of the OT we find particular, dietary ones (Lev 11). In his fascinating *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature* (NY: Free Press, 1994), the Jewish bioethicist Leon Kass concludes his rich exploration of eating with a chapter on these dietary laws, arguing that they “commemorate the Creation and the Creator and beckon us toward holiness” (198).

In *The Big Picture* we celebrate the fact that Christ plays in ten thousand places. He does this because the creation is his playground; from him, through him and to him are all things. And that includes food and place, the theme of this edition of *TBP*. In “5 Reasons” I attend to place and thus this editorial focuses on food. Like place, we in the West easily take food for granted, treating it like the petrol or gas we unthinkingly put in our cars, whereas food and eating are charged with meaning: “eating ... turns out to be a perfect subject for reopening the question about nature, human nature, and ethics” (11).

As with place, food reminds us that we are embodied, and that this is good and to be celebrated. According to Genesis 2:9 Eden is full of beautiful trees that are also good for food (טוֹב לִמְאֻכָּל). “Good” is the same word used repeatedly for God’s pronouncements about the different aspects of the creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3. Amid the concise narrative of Genesis 2, we need to take time to reflect on the immense variety of plant food built into the creation and the myriad ways in which different cultures have discovered and developed these down through the centuries, giving rise to great, rich traditions of preparing tasty, nutritious meals.

Like all sentient creatures we eat the creation in order to survive. Eating “is the first and most urgent activity of all animal and human life: We are only because we eat” (2). In recent decades we have become increasingly aware that not just any food will do; mass produced food often reduces the nutrients that we need in order to survive and flourish. Not surprisingly organic and local have become catchwords of our time, and rightly so.

For humans, however, food is about more than survival. It relates to how we steward and treat the non-human world, and this will understandably have led some



Rosa Bonheur, *Head of a Calf*

readers to become vegetarians and vegans. Making the food chain almost entirely subservient to a consumer culture does little good for us, our fellow creatures, or the environment. The cruel and unhelpful practices of much agribusiness have been rightly critiqued by authors like Wendell Berry. Whether we opt for vegetarianism or not – and it is great to see plant-based alternatives developing and readily available – we ought all to have a vested interest in how our fellow creatures are treated. Animals are sentient creatures, and we have a responsibility to see that they are not treated cruelly merely in order to produce food as quickly and profitably as possible. It is greatly to the credit of those Christians like William Wilberforce who fought for the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century that they also fought for animal rights and founded the SPCA, later to become the RSPCA. We do well to follow their example.



Marianne von Werefkin, *Fruit Harvest in a Mountain Garden*

To eat responsibly we will need to reconnect with nature and become familiar again with where our food comes from and how it reaches us. For years when I lived in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, I was privileged to shop regularly at The Mustard Seed Co-op, established in 2014 by Christians, including Graham Cubitt. They knew the farms from which their food came, and it was a delight to participate in such an initiative, one which sadly closed during the pandemic. We need a thousand such initiatives.

Tinned food and packaged meals have their place, but something is lost when we settle for the bland, reproduced en masse, while our history and cultures

hold so much treasure in terms of gathering and preparing great meals. Fast food has its limits and there is much to be gained from time taken to bake fresh bread, hours spent preparing a tasty and healthy meal, providing a rich context for community and family life. Robert Capon observes that, “We were given appetites, not to consume the world and forget it, but to taste its goodness and hunger to make it great” (*The Supper of the Lamb* [NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967, 1969], 189). We will not recover such hallowed glory of the ordinary if we do not slow down and take time.

Food is also a major means whereby we enjoy and deepen our relationships. After the Sinai covenant was formalised in Exodus 24, Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel – representing the people as a whole – ascend the mountain; they see God and share a meal in his presence. Meals facilitate and express communion, and it has been noted, not surprisingly therefore, that Jesus eats his way through the Gospels, constantly sharing meals. Good food and hospitality go hand in hand, whether of the simplest sort or a grand gesture such as that in *Babette’s Feast*, an older film well worth seeing. (See *The Hungry Soul*, 183–192). Kass says of *Babette’s feast* that, “Thanks to genius and taste, thanks to the extreme generosity and openness of both host and guest, the visage of the eternal shows itself in the midst of the most temporal, as superb food and wine nourish also the spiritual hungers of the assembled.”

So what does eating and drinking to the glory of God look like? It certainly means doing so responsibly and as good stewards of the creation and of ourselves. And it certainly means being mindful of our neighbours, even if they live in impoverished countries far from us. But it also means with joy and delight, celebrating the extraordinary gift of food. Robert Capon is certainly not a vegetarian, but he does capture love for and celebration of food like few others. He notes that,

It will be precisely because we loved Jerusalem enough to bear it in our bones that its textures will ascend when we rise; it will be because our eyes have relished the earth that the color of its countries will compel our hearts forever. The bread and the pastry, the cheeses, the wine, and the songs go into the supper of the Lamb because we do: It is our love that brings the City home. (*The Supper of the Lamb*, 190)

Craig Bartholomew is the Director of the Kirby Laing Centre.



GOD AS GARDENER. Picking up on a common theme in the ancient Near East, rulers – both human and divine – appear in the Old Testament in *gardener garb*. In this role it was expected that they would protect and work the land so that it could produce its bounty. Along these lines, Genesis 1 depicts God as the one causing all kinds of vegetation, as food for all animals and humans, to spring forth as the ultimate cornucopia throughout the earth. Genesis 2 describes the first humans maintaining a very particular garden, Eden (which means “luxury, bliss” in Hebrew), as God’s stewards. In Ecclesiastes, the king not only made a veritable paradise (2:4–6), but apparently even takes up a plough (5:9), thus developing a deep connection with the place from which his food comes. Outside the biblical texts, the Persian kings that ruled Judea after the exile (538–333 BCE) are rumoured to have only eaten food that came from their kingdom. All this to say, in antiquity a lush and fruitful garden represented the heights of excellence, power, enjoyment, and wealth (cf. Esth 1:5). These gardens were intended to serve as places of delight for all the senses, including the eye (their beauty), the ear (the singing birds; Song 2:12), and especially the mouth and nose through eating and drinking.

The fundamentally agricultural nature of ancient societies like Israel meant that God’s, and human leadership’s, primary responsibility concerned safeguarding crops from enemies and ensuring the necessary ingredients for bellies to become satisfied. God was therefore deeply concerned for the supplies of water, the physical ground, and the plants that grew in it.

(These could also serve as striking metaphors for God’s people in Isaiah 5:1–7 or John 15:1–8, not to mention Mary Magdalene taking Jesus for a gardener after his resurrection in John 20:15.)

DESTRUCATION OF AGRICULTURE AND FASTING IN JOEL 1–2. The lush descriptions of, e.g., Genesis 1–2 provide the backdrop for understanding how the desolation of the land, such that it could not provide for its human (and animal) residents, represents a tragedy on many fronts. This destruction marks broken bonds between God, earth, animals, and human worshippers that come to the fore in Joel 1–2. These chapters offer parallel descriptions of the annihilation of the agricultural land belonging to Zion, God’s chosen city of Jerusalem. They describe devastation beyond anything remembered (1:2–4; 2:2). Drought and perhaps wildfires (1:12, 19–20; 2:5), locusts (1:4), and an army as destructive as locusts (1:6), all brought about by God as the leader of the army (2:11), heap up one layer of ruin after another. Thus, rather than gardening and guarding the divinely-elected land, God brings desolation. While it may be tempting to think here of “pruning” in order to keep with the farming imagery, the locust army represents something far more destructive, often associated with the locust plague of

Exodus 10:4–20.

These events are described in similar ways, especially with the admission, even by pharaoh, of God’s control over them. Nonetheless, just as reported in Exodus 10:19, Joel 2:20 proclaims that God can also drive these bearers of destruction into the seas.

Joel 1–2 show the intricate connection between Jerusalem and Judah’s lands

Unknown artist, *Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene as a Gardener* (cropped)





Joseph Paul Vorst, *Drought*

failing to produce their bounty and the dearth of agricultural offerings on Jerusalem's altar (1:9–10, 16). The food products from Judah's gardens (and fields) are intended to reach God's altar. The surprising

feature that arises here is that *the priests and the land lead the people in lamenting the loss*: In v. 9 it is the priests, and in v. 10 the land that already mourn. These two groups seem to have been most sensitive to the divine rejection behind the land's destruction. In other verses the prophet calls the people to join in – the drunkard who enjoyed the products of the fields (1:5), the farmer who worked with the land to produce them (1:11), and the entire community, both young and old (1:14; 2:16). Likewise, various animals “groan” and “cry out,” augmenting the communal mourning.

Reading these chapters with an eye for “food and place” highlights the integral connection between food-producing land and worship, especially by mentioning Zion along with the priests and the house of the Lord (1:14). This text does not tell us whether the people had done something in particular to bring about this suffering (though the remark in 2:13: “Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God,” suggests some kind of insincere repentance in their past). Its focus, instead, lies on the admonition to carry out a particularly food-related action in response to the devastated land: because the food is “cut off before our eyes” (1:16), the people should proclaim a fast (1:14; 2:15).

That is, because food has been cut off through the devastation of their lands, the people should cut themselves off (further) from food as an act of worship. This action recognizes God's ability to restore the situation (2:14) by once again providing ample sustenance. There is a profound question mark in the unfolding of 2:14–17: How will God respond? The community's fast cannot compel God to intervene, but it can display both trust in God's ability and hope that divine action will ensue. These verses acknowledge a

conviction that the human community alone cannot bring about its own deliverance from the desolation of its land. This is a fundamental question on the table in our modern moment with regard to climate change: Can humans invent means to stop (or reverse) climate change? And, even if such technologies emerge (or have already emerged), do humans have the goodness of heart (or will) to use the technologies for the good of all – all humans, animals and plants – that will restore the land, and with it, humanity's future? Biblical analysis, theological reflection, and the documented inability of nations to hit their emission reduction targets suggest otherwise.

GOD'S RESTORATIVE INTERVENTION. In Joel 2:18–27 God's own proclamation asserts that *divine action* will bring their hopes to fulfilment. It is the arousal of God's own zeal (jealousy) *for the land* that engenders pity for the people (as well as the land and animals). This mercy overflows into abundant harvests, which indicates healed land. In response, in 2:21–22, it is *first* the soil that God consoles, followed by the animals. In v. 21, the soil is invited to rejoice, with humans belonging to Zion following its lead in v. 23. The crescendo continues, moving toward feasting and worship of God in v. 26, and reaching a climax in v. 27. Here is God's proclamation of taking up residence in the midst of Israel. The Lord's return to Zion, to the temple, is even heralded by the return of bountiful harvests. Luxury or bliss, the “Eden” that the army destroys in 2:3, returns in the physical enjoyment (rather than merely some kind of immaterial rejoicing!) of food and drink (2:23–27). The bonds between God, land, animals and people become whole.

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Paul Klee,
Temple Gardens



Photo by
Katerina Pavlyuchkova

5 REASONS TO (Re)discover PLACE TODAY

CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW

When I was doing my research for my book *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Baker Academic, 2011), a regular cause of puzzlement was my answer to the question “What are you working on nowadays?”, namely *place!* Place is just not something people think about very much and yet it is everywhere. Place is your home where you sit reading this article, it is your garden outside, your town or city, your country, your office or workplace, etc. We live amidst the intersection of a myriad places and yet, remarkably, we rarely stop and think about them as places. There is an immense amount to be gained from (re)discovering place today for the following five reasons.

1. BECAUSE PLACE STEMS FROM HOW GOD MADE THE WORLD.

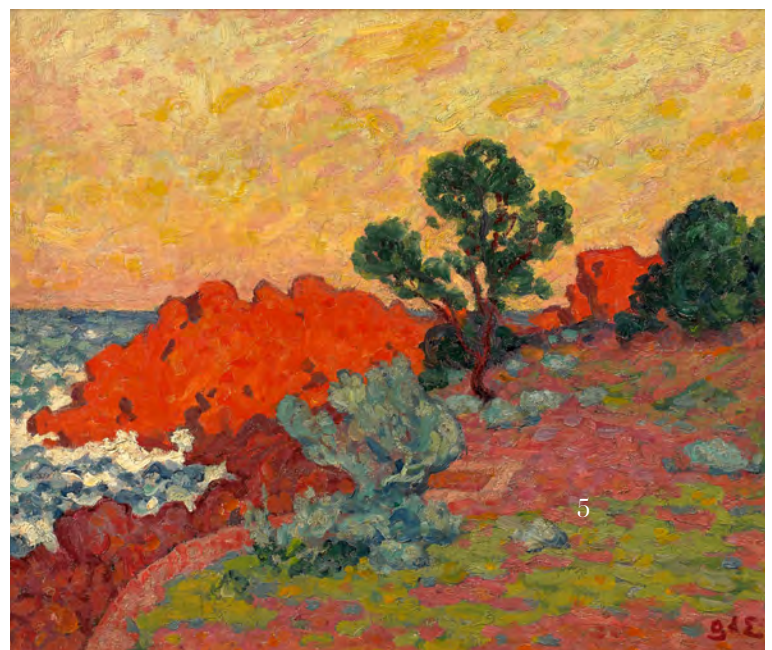
Place is grounded in the doctrine of creation. Whereas in the ancient Near East many of the creation stories see humans as created in order to make the lives of the gods easy, in Genesis 1 and 2 the world is created as the ideal *home* for humans. There is a radical other person centeredness to God that is

lacking among the all too human gods of the ancient Near East. The first major distinction of places is between heaven – where God dwells – and earth, the abode of humans and animals. In the course of the differentiation of the creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3, three major places emerge, namely sea, land and sky. In the course of the creation narrative each of these is filled with its inhabitants, the sea with fish, the sky with birds, and land with plants, animals and humans. If one is looking for a biblical basis for delight in, enjoyment of, and responsibility towards these three great places of earth, sea and sky, then it is right here in the doctrine of creation, that creation which God brought into being by his command and pronounced very good. (See Bruce R. Ashford and Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Doctrine of Creation: A Constructive Kuyperian Approach* [IVP Academic, 2020], chapter 6).

2. BECAUSE PLACE RELATES TO OUR EMBODIMENT.

God is omnipresent but humans by contrast are always located and dated, subject to being in a particular place at a particular time. This stems irretrievably from our embodied nature.

This is why Genesis 1:1–2:3 moves on from *the whole world* as our home to a very particular place, namely Eden, as the home for the first couple. Unlike God, they can only dwell in one place, and that place is Eden. And what an extraordinary place it is. Eden is often referred to as a garden, but it is far more like one of the vast parks that you find in the USA and



Canada. It is planted by God (Gen 2:8) and is lush with rivers flowing in and out of it and rich in minerals, namely gold, bdellium and onyx (Gen 2:12). It is full of trees and plants, which are both aesthetically pleasing and a wonderful provision of food.

Eden is sometimes thought of as a pristine wilderness but, as Peter Altmann's fine article in this edition shows, it was ruled in the ancient Near East who above all developed such gardens. Indeed, gardens were more of an urban than a wilderness phenomenon.

Advocates of wilderness understandably argue against human intervention because of the damage we humans often inflict on the world, but here the first Adam is assigned a priestly role; he is to till and to keep Eden (Gen 2:15), namely, to manage it and to cultivate and develop it. The first Adam, we might say, is in the full-time service of the LORD God ... as a farmer! And Eve is created as Adam's helper, not least in this great task of managing Eden.

Thus, from the very outset, creation care is at the heart of what it means to be human. And this is by no means restricted to the Old Testament. Rembrandt has an extraordinary etching of the resurrected Jesus as a gardener! He has understood that Jesus is the second Adam, who recapitulates the calling of humans in himself and sets us and the creation free to become what he always intended for it.

Place is thus grounded, not only in

the doctrine of creation, but also in the doctrine of the human person. We are embodied, and thus always in place. As Christians have often done, whenever we diminish the importance of our earthy, material bodies and make our souls or spirits what really matter, place likewise becomes marginalised. Biblical anthropology – the nature of the human person – is a complex matter, but it is always the whole, embodied person that is in the image of God. Indeed, Genesis 2:7 is instructive here. God forms Adam from the earth and breathes

3. BECAUSE WE SHAPE PLACE, AND IT SHAPES US.

For those of us who lecture or teach, we will resonate with the experience of teaching in a pristine, white lecture room with fluorescent light beating down upon us and with nary an artwork in sight. Such rooms appear to be constructed with the view that the more abstract and anaemic the room, the better will be the learning experience. Alas the reverse is true but note my point; we shape the room and then the room shapes us!



Rembrandt, *Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene*

This is exactly how place works. Because we are created to “till and keep” the world, we have significant power to shape and develop places. Reflect for just a moment on the human ingenuity in building and developing cities, houses, roads, malls, cathedrals, dams, furniture, kitchens, bedrooms, parks, restaurants, office blocks, farms, movie houses, houses of parliament, skyscrapers, etc. Such is our power that it sometimes seems to have few limits.

into him so that he becomes a living being or soul. Here at least, the whole, embodied Adam is a living soul! And, as is well known, in the Apostles' Creed we confess our belief in the resurrection of the body and the soul, the whole human person.

Being embodied certainly limits us but it is a glorious limitation. It is precisely our bodies that make the experience of place possible.

However, when it comes to place it is never a one-way street of humans making and shaping places. We shape them but they in turn shape us. And they often do so unconsciously but powerfully. The invention of the car was a major feat. But, think of what has followed. Cars need paved roads and we have built millions of kilometres of them across the planet with little thought of the implications for animal life and the environment. We spend billions each year maintaining

them even as we build better and faster cars. Ironically, it is precisely such cars that sit in huge traffic jams in most of the major cities of the world each day, stressing us out – generally one passenger per car in our individualistic West – as we commute to work. We built the cars, and we built the roads, and now they return the compliment by shaping us.

The car has also made possible the often-dreadful monotony of suburban sprawl in North American towns in particular. Often the large box house with its double garage facing the road, sits on its plot adjacent to another such plot. Such houses and properties are often not cheap but spell the death of community. One can live hermetically sealed off in one’s massive box without ever knowing who your neighbours are.

Of course, place can also shape us in wonderfully positive ways. We find those coffee shops that not only serve great coffee but are also a tranquil environment in which to relax and spend time alone or with a friend. KLC’s offices are located in Cambridge, UK, and it is amazing to walk around Cambridge and to drink in the extraordinary architecture of the colleges, with spires pointing towards heaven and calling its residents to honour the trinitarian God in the quest for knowledge of this world that belongs to God. But places that nurture us



Taichung Rainbow Village, Taiwan

need not have the grandeur of the major Cambridge colleges. As I learnt in South Africa, the poor who create their homes out of cast-off wood and iron in the shanty-towns that spring up around our cities, often manifest a profound aesthetic in the use of the minimal resources at their disposal, while in the West wealthy middle-class folk proudly live in their aesthetically impoverished cookie-cutter houses, utterly indistinguishable from one another.

4. BECAUSE WE CAN RADICALLY MISSHAPE PLACE.

After the fall, humans do not cease being powerful, but they are constantly tempted to use their power to develop places in destructive, inhuman ways. The Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 stands as the great symbol of such hubris. History is littered with such towers, both great and small. Names of places such as Auschwitz

and Birkenau haunt our memories, places including great gas chambers built amidst Europe during World War II. Such places, as has been observed, were quintessentially modern “achievements,” but demonic in their

misdirection of the human capacity of placemaking, so that the enormity of the blood shed in such places scars them for life and cries out to God (Gen 4:10).

Such places of indescribable evil are unusual but sadly not restricted to the Holocaust. Many of our “towers” are also examples of misdirection but mercifully in a far less consequential, albeit not inconsequential, way. I referred above to roads and suburban sprawl. All our placemaking has the potential for misdirection. Think of the church building that is like a factory and entirely functional, evoking nothing of the creativity and glory of the good news of Jesus. Think of towns that house huge numbers of people but are built so as – albeit unintentionally – to discourage community. Think of agribusiness farms that pour chemicals into the earth destroying the health of the soil and so much of the animal life that depends upon

it. Think of the three great places of the creation, mentioned above, namely earth, sky and sea. Environmental degradation of the earth is notorious, and now we have learnt what our penchant for plastic is doing to the oceans. Even that last frontier of space has now



Roger Wagner, *Menorah*



Photo: Kristin Tovar

become a garbage dump as satellites and other equipment we launch into space expire and are abandoned to float around endlessly.

If we are unconscious of place, we will unconsciously align with the misdirection of placemaking that is so common in our cultures. Fortunately, it need not be so.

5. BECAUSE A REDISCOVERY OF PLACE COULD IGNITE CHRISTIAN MISSION LIKE NOTHING ELSE.

Wouldn't it be astonishing if there was one thing Christians could do to reignite mission – the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world – today? There is: attention to place and placemaking. Let me explain.

Think of all the properties owned by churches throughout the world. Imagine, for example, if each of those churches managed their gardens by filling them with indigenous plants so that they became renowned among the birds of the air as the best local place to hang out! We are not talking expensive here; indigenous plants are often the cheapest available and they grow well precisely because they are indigenous. Such gardens would become like bird sanctuaries and a sign of the kingdom.

Imagine if, when Christians built a new church, they made sure in a humble but glorious way that the very architecture speaks to the neighbourhood of the good news of Jesus. Cathedrals do this in their own way but so too does the humble, local church building if constructed creatively.

Imagine if Christians, having become conscious of place, awoke to the horror of homelessness and of being a refugee fleeing from your home but with no idea of your destination, became champions of a home for everyone and worked alongside the poor and homeless to find homemaking solutions.

Imagine if those of us with many places, unlocked what Edith Schaeffer called their “hidden art,” so that our places, whether our living rooms or bedrooms, our shops or offices, exuded an appropriate *shalom* that facilitates human and non-human flourishing.

It has been noted that one of the great needs of Christian mission today is a plausibility structure, so that when we speak our words ring with authenticity. Because we are embodied, we are always already in place/s. All we need to do is to work out how to become creatively and redemptively in place, and our plausibility would be wonderfully enhanced. Our lives – the way in which we shape and indwell our places – would call forth questions from our neighbours, and then we would be in a position to give a reason for the hope within us.

Craig Bartholomew is the Director of the KLC.

The Menorah image is by kind permission of Roger Wagner (www.rogerwagner.co.uk). See also ArtWay.eu ([Wagner, Roger - VM - Marleen Hengelaar; Wagner, Roger - VM - Nigel Halliday](http://Wagner.Roger-VM-MarleenHengelaar; Wagner.Roger-VM-NigelHalliday)).

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Where Mortals Dwell

A Christian View of Place for Today

Craig G. Bartholomew

Time and Place and Eating Together

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, THAMES DITTON
DAVID PARISH

It is late 1179 and the June evening shadows are lengthening but still there is the steady swish, swish of scythes as lay workers from Merton Priory cut the wheat and stack the sheaves. There is also the low sound of men's voices: they sing in rhythm to their work and in turn the speed of the song sets the pace of the work. There is a sense of relief as the chapel bell rings for evening prayer and they join the small group of monks who maintain the chapel.

The western light flows through to the chancel as the monks chant the compline service and sing the psalms. Darkness deepens but there is a sense that this is a time and place where God is present.

The year is now 1547 and England has been through the turmoil of the Reformation. Merton Priory is in ruins, felled by Thomas Cromwell's team of "underminers" who blow out the foundation, leaving only a few walls. Merton College in Oxford is the sole permanent record of the wealth and power of the Augustinian priors.

St Nicholas is now on the lands of the Imber Court lords; the living passes to their control and the church becomes protestant in outlook, except for the "doom paintings" – a series of panels depicting the day of judgement, when the righteous and wrongdoers receive the rewards of heaven or hell. Preaching is from the Geneva Bible, newly printed in London. The rewards of the harvest are shared among the labourers and the Lord of the Manor who, of course, gets the larger share. The village of Thames Ditton expands, becoming a settlement and the people earn a living from farming and fishing. The church grows, expanding from the narrow Norman field chapel into a substantial place of worship.

The year is now 1870 and the railway has come to Thames Ditton from a new terminus at Waterloo on the southern edge of London, close to the open lands of Clapham Common.

Thames Ditton, now a desirable place to live for wealthy merchants who build mansions near the village, attracts the new clerical class who work in the banks and businesses of central London. All

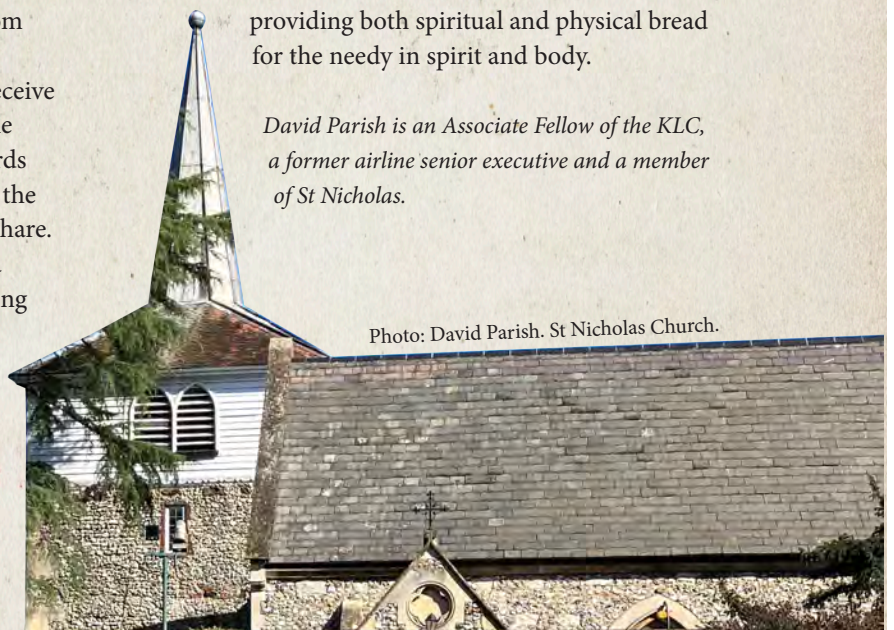
give generously to the church and it grows again in size. Wheat and barley are still grown, providing bread and beer for a London about to quadruple in size in forty years.

The year is now 2023. St Nicholas is still at the centre of the village but the homes of the wealthy are now apartments or care homes and Imber Court is now a health club. Fields are full of houses and the voices and sounds of harvest are ghostly shadows. The "doom paintings" remain to remind church members, and the numerous visitors who call in to see the wonderful architecture, that God will one day judge the world. The Geneva Bible is still in the care of the church but preaching is from the NIV or ESV. Food, though, remains central to the life and mission of the church. Every week there is a community café serving home-baked cake and coffee from a full-scale barista-style coffee machine. There is a monthly hot meal, but during this cold winter it was weekly. There is also a food bank run in conjunction with the main one in Elmbridge.

The other constants through the centuries are that the word of God has been preached and sung praise has been offered to the God who is faithful, providing both spiritual and physical bread for the needy in spirit and body.

David Parish is an Associate Fellow of the KLC, a former airline senior executive and a member of St Nicholas.

Photo: David Parish. St Nicholas Church.



The Music of Mission¹ Psalm 96: 4-9

A New Song that Displaces the Old Gods

CHRIS WRIGHT



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Blue and Green Music*

In our first reflection on Psalm 96 (*TBP* 06), we observed how verses 1-3 call on worshippers to sing a new song that, first of all, refreshes the old words. Words that had been part of the old songs of Israel for centuries – the name, salvation, glory and mighty deeds of Yahweh – were envisaged as a new song to be sung among new peoples in all the earth. And that is a truly missional vision that goes back to God's promise to Abraham. The story of Israel's saving history with Yahweh God would become music in the ears

1. The heading is borrowed from a fine article by W. Creighton Marlowe, "Music of Missions: Themes of Cross-Cultural Outreach in the Psalms," *Missiology* 26 (1998), 445-456.

and mouths of the rest of the world, in the missional prophetic imagination of the psalmist.

Moving on to the central section of the psalm, verses 4-9, we find that this is a new song that, secondly, displaces the old gods.

The new song is to be sung by a very large choir – all peoples in all the earth. But to whom is this new song to be sung?

An audience of one! That is stated emphatically three times "Sing to *the LORD* ..." in vv. 1-2. The psalmist is not calling on the nations to raise a song of celebration for whatever god or gods they may have – a kind of multi-faith religious worship festival of music and praise, such as might be welcomed today in some of our great multi-ethnic cities. No, the nations must join in singing praises to *this* God, *Yahweh* God, the God of *Israel's* history and Scriptures. That's who the original song was about: *Yahweh's* name and salvation and glory.

And it is Israel who must lead the choir and teach the words of the song, because it was in Israel's unique history of redemption and revelation that the one true living God of all the earth had made his identity known. That is how Moses interpreted the great foundational events of Israel's early history. Read Deuteronomy 4:32-39. What God had done for Israel in the exodus and at Mt Sinai was unprecedented (he had never done it anywhere else) and unparalleled (he had not done it for any other nation). So Israel was in the unique position of knowing the living God in a way that no other nation did at that time. Indeed, they were *entrusted* with that knowledge, since we know that the purpose of being chosen by God in Abraham was ultimately to be the people through whom God would bring blessing to all nations – the same blessing of knowing God as redeemer, revealer and covenant Lord.

³⁵ You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other.

³⁹ Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. (Deut 4:35, 39)

So if there is no other God, then there is no place in the new song for the other gods, the old gods of Canaan, or the seemingly powerful gods of the surrounding nations. These central verses of Psalm 96,



Margret Hofheinz-Döring, *Worship of the Golden Calf*

then, call for a radical displacement of the old gods. They cannot stay around when the new song is being sung to the Lord, to Yahweh, the one true living God revealed in Israel.

⁴ For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.

⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

Verses 4 and 5 give us some reasons for this displacement and exclusion

of the gods (note the opening “For ...”). Only Yahweh is great. Only Yahweh is worthy of praise. Only Yahweh is to be feared above all gods.

Now verses 4 and 5 might seem to say two different things about these other gods. In verse 4 they seem to be *something*, something that you can be afraid of. If Yahweh is to be feared *above* all the gods, then it seems the other gods are things that we fear. And indeed, fear is a major driver of the manufacture of gods. Human beings have much to

fear. We’re afraid of this unpredictable world, we’re afraid of the power of nature, we’re afraid of powers we don’t understand, we’re afraid of a very uncertain future, we’re afraid of people who oppress us, we’re afraid of ideologies and worldviews that can be so destructive. And then in fear, we try to placate these terrors with some more powerful gods, to find some measure of security and protection. Fear generates idolatry – just as true in the

sophisticated late-modern Western world as in any other religious cultural worldview. But, says verse 4, whatever we might be afraid of, or idolize out of fear, Yahweh is incomparably greater and more powerful. He really is the only God to be feared. “Fear him, you saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear.”²

And so verse 5 somewhat “corrects”

2. A line from Nahum Tate’s wonderful hymn – a paraphrase of Psalm 34, “Through all the changing scenes of life.”

verse 4. If the gods of the nations seem to be *something* (something to be feared), we need to recognize that in reality they are *nothing* – nothing in comparison to the living God. There is a delightful play on words in the Hebrew of verse 5. The word for God is *elohim* and the word translated here as “idols” is *elilim*. That word basically means weak and worthless, just a puff of breath, nothing at all really. Whereas the Lord God in verse 5, is the creator of the universe. There’s no contest! What do you want for a god to worship? A puff of breath or God the creator!

So if you’re looking for splendour, majesty, strength, glory – something you can really worship – where are you going to find it? Not in all the sanctuaries of other gods, whatever they may be. Not, in our modern world, in the idolatrous dazzle of a massive sports stadium or celebrity award ceremony, or the deck of an aircraft carrier, or the thrusting phallic symbols of competing corporate skyscrapers (isn’t it childish how nations boast about who has the tallest free-standing buildings?! Babel has not gone away), or the hubristic display of a nation’s military might and destructive power, or the prestigious display of mega-wealth in mansions and yachts, or the trade in political privileges and influence. No, says verse 6, only the Lord God has the substance and the power and the reality. Only in humble submission to his presence and governance will we find true greatness.

⁶ Splendour and majesty are before **him**; strength and glory are in **his** sanctuary.

So where then, asks verses 7 to 9, where are the nations to bring their worship? For human beings are worshipping creatures – that’s

definitional of our creation in God's image and the reason why we make gods for ourselves. But if Yahweh alone is God, then all human worship should, and ultimately will, come to **him** – not to those other gods. Which is why I think we should read these verses with the emphases below.

⁷ Ascribe to **the LORD**, all you families of nations, ascribe to **the LORD** glory and strength.

⁸ Ascribe to **the LORD** the glory due **his** name; bring an offering and come into **his** courts.

⁹ Worship **the LORD** in the splendour of **his** holiness; tremble before **him**, all the earth.

So you see there's a polemical challenge in these central verses of the psalm, which we sometimes miss because we just read them on such a flat plane. The psalm is claiming that the new song to the living God ultimately displaces all other gods. And this too is the effect of mission.

Mission transforms the religious landscape of a person, of a family, of a community. Indeed, in the long sweep of history, Christian mission in the name of the living God and in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ has transformed whole cultures – even if (as in the case of secularized European culture) that transformation is unrecognized and unattributed to its origins in Christian faith and biblical truth and values. Mission challenges

and displaces the old gods and eventually moves them aside.

It's worth noticing that the psalmist does not invite the nations to *add* the worship of Yahweh to all their other gods: "Please make room for our god too ...". When my family and I lived in India, we used to buy our bread in a bakery in Pune which rejoiced in the name of the Royal Bakery. And on the shelf behind the counter you would see a beautiful picture of Jesus – a Madonna and child, with a little garland around

inviting the nations, or any of us, *to make room for Jesus* on the shelf of all the other things we choose to worship.

There are even some kinds of evangelism that sound like that. Choose Jesus! – but as a lifestyle choice among many other options that are still available. But no, this psalm calls on all the nations of the world to accept the same exclusive commitment that was expected of Israel. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord and you shall

love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your strength" (Deut 6:4–5), and, "you shall have no other gods before my face" (Ex 20:3).

Likewise, for us this means declaring among the nations that **Jesus** is Lord, fully, eternally, uniquely, and there is no other – "no other name by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). So this new song, then, proclaims the good news of the gospel, in such a way that we can sing

it only in the temple of the living God, not in the temples of other gods – except for the purpose of ultimately displacing them.

Rev Dr Chris Wright is Global Ambassador and Ministry Director of Langham Partnership (www.langham.org), the author of many books including commentaries on Exodus, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel, and is a Senior Research Fellow of the KLC.



Viktor Vasnetsov, *Christ Pantocrator*, St Volodymyr's Cathedral, Kyiv

and a candle underneath. So you might think this is a Christian shop, until you noticed that beside Jesus on the shelf there was the elephant-headed Ganesh, one of the gods of Hinduism. And on the other side was a little model of dancing Krishna and further along a little seated Buddha ... This shopkeeper was hedging all his bets to make sure whatever gods are there were on his side. Now that's not what this psalm is about. The psalmist is not

COULD AFRICA CATCH A COLD FROM THE WEST'S DECLINING CHURCHES? BURUNDI'S LEADERS THINK SO

Jenny Taylor

The crowd is huge, the music loud. The mood becomes suddenly frenetic. People run to join the dancing, some jumping and ululating ecstatically. Then from among them, maybe two hundred and fifty press forward, as the preacher's voice rises in an altar call of almost unbearable amplification. A small boy limps across the stage having thrown away his crutches. A man in a smart shirt and suit gives his testimony of turning from a squalor of drink and prostitutes to reunion with his family.



Evangelism explosion.

This is an evangelistic rally in up-country Burundi in the Great Lakes Region of Central East Africa and the people are hungry. They want healing and hope. Englishman Simon Guillebaud is the draw. Two and a half thousand people have travelled to hear him preach on "faith not fear." A fourth-generation missionary, he was born here and speaks Kirundi. His great-grandfather and great-aunt translated the Bible.¹ Pioneers of the Rwanda Mission, part of the famous East African Revival, their legacy lives on. Or it did until recently.

Western culture is coming, and the leaders are worried. It is, they say, already beginning to undo their work. "We discovered that we have a lot of signs of declining of the church," says Isaiah Nshimirimana, leader of United Citizens for Change and Development, who organized the rally. "This is a very dangerous time for us, and we need to do everything possible, not late."

One of the moves they've made is to bring together

1. Harold E. Guillebaud and Rosemary Guillebaud, *Isezerano Risha ry'umwami wacu n'umukiza Yesu Kristo* (Bujumbura: Société Biblique, [1970], circa 1967).

the leaders and bishops of the "legacy churches" – Anglican, Baptist, Methodist – in March. They identified the signs and are meeting again in June to look at solutions. They don't believe they can wait until next year.

He itemises their problems in an email message:

1. Looking back we saw how strong the churches were twenty to thirty years ago.
2. We saw how the Holy Spirit was moving through the churches.
3. We saw how Christianity was in Europe when they brought us the gospel and how they are now.
4. We asked what caused the decline there.

We are now on the same page by agreeing to look at the solutions."

It is ironic that the Guillebaud family were all Anglican missionaries with the Church Missionary Society. That's the outreach arm of the Church of England, whose Bishop in Oxford preaches "relevance" and supports gay marriage. According to the respected website Anglican Ink, on current trends, the C of E will be extinct by 2060.² So will all the other pre-1900 AD churches. By contrast,

the post-1900 churches – which according to this analysis are all evangelical – are the only ones growing, and growing strongly.

Simon, perhaps happily, was turned down for service with the by now sclerotic CMS in the early 2000s, despite already surviving ten years of war in Burundi as a Scripture Union evangelist. His often-hair-raising record of this time, in a best-selling book called *Dangerously Alive: African adventures of faith under fire* (Monarch, 2011), made for anxious reading before my own trip with him. He went back with Scripture Union, then set up his own outfit, Great Lakes Outreach (GLO). He funnels funds and prayer to more than thirty carefully chosen partner organizations across the nation. It has been outstandingly successful.

Educated at a top English school, Harrow, Simon bleeds his rich contacts in the UK and the US relentlessly. GLO's UK income comes in at around £1.5million per

2. John Hayward, "Growth, Decline and Extinction of UK Churches," Anglican Ink (May 21, 2022). <https://anglican.ink/2022/05/21/growth-decline-and-extinction-of-uk-churches>.



Photo: Jenny Taylor. Simon Guillebaud with Ephraim Ngendakuriyo

annum, and more from the US. He has even built a Trip Advisor-rated five-star hotel in the capital Bujumbura on the banks of Lake Tanganyika to provide more than fifty jobs and an income that meets fifty percent of SU's in-country budget. GLO funds schools and hospitals, and is building a home for retired pastors. Simon can find the money for a hundred computers for the top Christian school, Gitega International Academy, in short order. Dieudonné Nahimana's father, a judge, was buried alive in a pit during the war. Dieudonné found himself on the streets, starving. He survived, later managing to find his father's killer and – astoundingly – forgive him. Then he educated the man's children. Today he runs an outreach for street-connected children, and with meagre resources, provides training and small jobs: one of the country's first baristas works in his makeshift café. A once suicidal youth, he now conjures up flat whites for us from a machine donated by the company and a Cornish church.

The world's poorest country – it vies with Sierra Leone for that dubious accolade – Burundi has little industry. Every square inch, even roadside verges, is cultivated. From the mountainous hinterland, a verdant patchwork of tiny fields and tall trees stretches away as far as the eye can see. And that's part of the problem. There may be

no pollution, few cars, and no litter, but the well-managed fields are too small to support the sons and grandsons of the farmers. These disorientated young men are easily exploited as fighters.

One of GLO's partners, CAPAMI, works with the police and army, treating PTSD, building a sense of one-nationhood. The emotional scarring goes deep, and politics feeds it. Not enough is being done to bind the nation together, says Acher Niyonizigiye: "Political manipulation of ethnic identity tends to put tribal affiliation above a sense of nationhood."

Burundi lives in the shadow of its more successful neighbour Rwanda. People forget that Burundi suffered an earlier genocide in 1972, when 300,000 died. Then a further 300,000 died following the plane crash in 1994 that killed both nations' presidents and sparked the slaughter. Those figures together vie with Rwanda's 800,000. And each meltdown – and there was nearly another in 2015 – "sets back the country by thirty years," says Simon.

"Conscience money" – as it is loosely called by locals – from the West has meant that Rwanda is flourishing, its economy and political stability at least thirty years ahead of its neighbour. It is now listed as the 6th most secure nation in the world according to Business Insider Africa.³ Burundi, almost forgotten, comes 131st.⁴ It remains mired in an unbroken record of coups, assassinations and political ineptitude. And the psychological toll is immeasurable. Many children in Burundi who find themselves on the street during these conflagrations, do not even know their own names.

Sadly, all the church's good work could be undone as the West's new religion, entitlement, takes hold. Acher Niyonizigiye believes that globalisation is a serious threat to the country. Just getting back on its feet, Burundi may not prove strong enough to withstand the "Tower of Babel" effect he says will surely follow. Does he fear being swamped by Anglo-American



Left: Barista Herve at New Generation
Below: Street boys at New Generation

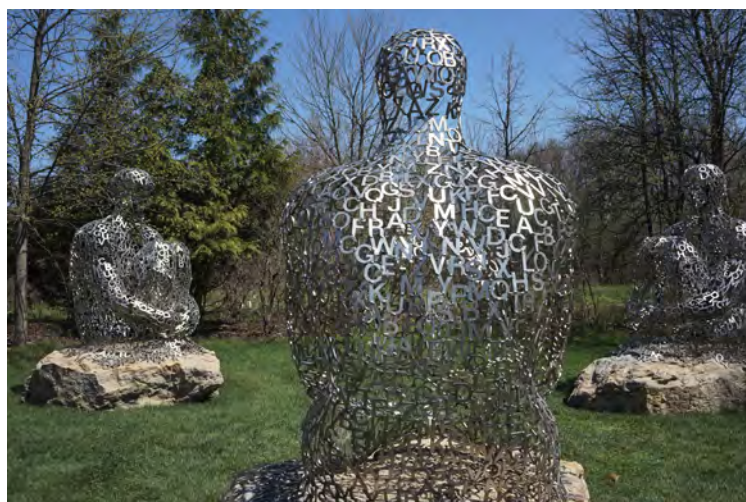


3. See "Rwanda is the safest country in Africa for solo travellers, according to a survey," Business Insider Africa, (30 September, 2022), <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/rwanda-is-the-safest-country-in-africa-for-solo-travellers-according-to-a-survey/4q4gnph>.
4. Global Peace Index Map (2022) » The Most & Least Peaceful Countries, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/>.

and Chinese culture? “Absolutely. We already have a Confucius Academy in Burundi, and diplomatic, commercial and educational ties with China are on the rise.”

One problem is that little is being done to increase the “mastery of Kirundi” – the traditional language – among the younger generation. “The message that is being communicated is: you do not need Kirundi to succeed in life, but you need French, English or Chinese.” He says – ironically – that he is working with some diaspora Burundians in Sweden, and the UK – to counter it.

The school motto is pinned to the walls of every classroom at Gitega International Academy (GIA) in Burundi’s new political capital. It affords a heady prospect. “Our vision: Raising up a generation of godly leaders to transform our society.” But are the donors, who warm to these mottos, aware they risk merely educating future Westerners? I chatted to two 15-year-olds at GIA, sitting at their new computer screens. I asked what they wanted for their future. One said – in English – “to become an international footballer.” The other, also in English, that he wanted to be a doctor – in Canada.



Jaume Plensa, *babel i-you-she-he*

“Most young people desire to go to the West for better opportunities and, therefore, value foreign languages more than their mother tongue,” says Acher Niyonizigiye.

Scholars increasingly recognise the role of language in fostering, even earthing, identity, however. Ukrainians are renouncing their use of Russian.⁵ The same is happening with Taiwan and China. A beleaguered Israel had a similar problem: before Hebrew was invented, and they received the Covenant in their own language, the Jewish people were a mere rabble, outsiders, according to George Mendenhall in *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* ([Johns Hopkins Press,

5. “Enemy tongue: eastern Ukrainians reject their Russian birth language,” *The Guardian*. Accessed 28 March 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/04/enemy-tongue-eastern-ukrainians-reject-their-russian-birth-language>.

1973], 16). They were at the mercy of more brutal nations. But around 1300 BC a new and unique pattern solidified. Mysteriously, but undoubtedly, God spoke on Mount Sinai in their own language, causing scribes to write it down. The Covenant, and the Bible that emerged from it, did not do so in the lingua franca of the ascendant powers, Egypt or Babylon. The law of the Torah, the histories, and the prophecies were written down in their own speech language. Hebrew was invented to create a people for God, out of the hodge-podge of humanity that came out of Egypt. According to the secular Jewish scholar Seth Sanders, in his *The Invention of Hebrew* ([University of Illinois Press, 2011], 1), this was the first time in history that a people had been addressed directly as “you” and “The Bible is the first text to address people as a public.”

Israel became not a threat but a light to the surrounding nations. So it was in the sixteenth century with Luther’s Bible in demotic German, and William Tyndale’s rustic

English, still two of the richest languages in history. *Gentem lingua facit* said Claudius Marius Victor in a fifth century margin note on Genesis: language creates a people.⁶

Could wealthy donors increase Burundi’s chances of prospering by making matching

gifts for Kirundi scholarship obligatory? There is just one Bible commentary in Kirundi. And the idea of archives was new when I suggested it to Scripture Union’s extraordinary leaders. Could this create a quarantine against globalization? It remains to be seen whether Burundi fulfils its promise to become a light not just to Africa, but to the world.

Dr Jenny Taylor is Associate Fellow in Journalism, Media and Communication at the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology. Her book, Unacceptable Truth: The Biblical Foundations of the Fourth Estate and How to Save Journalism is forthcoming. For information contact Dan Balow at www.SteveLaube.com. Photographs courtesy of Great Lakes Outreach (www.greatlakesoutreach.org), unless credited otherwise.

6. Claudius Marius Victor, *Alethia* 3.274, cited in Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 118.



CHURCH LIFE IN AN AFRICAN TOWNSHIP

FR PIERRE GOLDIE

Typically, on Sunday morning, at 7.45am I drive from the Catholic parish church of St Raphael in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, to one of the two small “outstations” about five kilometres away, in a very urban, built-up environment, to celebrate my first Mass at 8.30am. As with every Sunday, I sense an aura of peace, serenity; a Sunday blessing of the Holy Spirit to an awakening world, and the streets, houses and shacks seem to be immersed in an early morning calm, grace, tranquillity. I return to St Raphael for the 10.30am Mass. The main church enjoys an attendance of up to two hundred on Easter Sunday; the other two stations, All Saints and St Therese, accommodate eighty-five and sixty, respectively.

We recall that in the apartheid regime, people were classified as Asian, Black, “Coloured” or White. In the Archdiocese of Cape Town, the racial split of the total number of Catholics is some 50,000 Blacks, 150,000 Coloureds and 70,000 Whites. This analysis is still of some relevance, as under the former apartheid regime, these groups were required to live in separate geographic areas, and they have some significant cultural differences. The allocation of quality of residence, education and work opportunities to each group was modelled by an apartheid mentality and favoured the Whites, then the Coloureds and finally the Blacks. The geography of where each group lives is still shaped by this former policy, as it will take time for an equitable allocation to result under the new dispensation.

The black towns are titled “townships,” a label which has a somewhat negative overtone, patent in cheaper construction and smaller units, alongside hundreds of thousands of shacks (or favelas as they

are referred to in South America). Poverty is more prevalent in these townships and as poverty tends to breed dehumanized conditions, the crime rate is higher. The smaller houses also hail back to the apartheid days. Under apartheid, the white government of the Western Cape, where Khayelitsha and other African “townships” are located, did its best to keep Blacks from entering the province, but their efforts were not successful.

Even today, surely the biggest human migration in the world is taking place in Africa and South America, where people are flocking from the poorer country areas to the cities and bigger towns. Lima, in Peru, for example, has land invasions, crime, shacks (or favelas), great poverty, the ubiquitous minibus taxis, and struggles for water, sanitation, schooling for children, electricity (scarce for many) and jobs. This sounds just like Cape Town! Blacks have been steadily leaving the very poor Eastern Cape and settling in Cape Town and environs. The Industrial Revolution, especially the discovery of fertilizers, radically reduced the number of rural people needed to produce enough food for everybody. This is one reason for the extreme poverty in the country areas and the pressure to migrate to the cities.



Photo: Pierre Goldie. St Raphael, Khayelitsha

“Blacks” in Cape Town refers mainly to the Xhosa and Sotho societies, a smaller portion of other indigenous peoples and a significant number of “Black” foreign nationals who have left poorer economies or internal conflicts to earn a living in South Africa.

My parishioners are largely Xhosa, but the number of Sothos has been increasing. For whatever reason the Holy

Spirit has, I have felt a calling within a calling to work as a parish priest in the townships, hence my tenure in the Khayelitsha parish. I sympathize with the parishioners who have to put up with my dangerous pronunciation of Xhosa words, as I celebrate the Mass in isiXhosa. It's a humbling (humiliating?!) task at times, to attempt to pronounce a word with up to twenty-two letters and ten syllables, but I do my best and I have never heard amused sounds or derisive comments. Perhaps, however, this is because of my insensitive, aging ears! At this stage, there are insufficient Xhosa priests in the Archdiocese to staff the African parishes, and in any event, Xhosa priests also serve in the other "Coloured" and White parishes, they are not confined to Xhosa parishes.

The parishioners are very accommodating, welcoming, accepting and hospitable, and many are doing the best they can for their children and grandchildren with substantially limited finances. They appreciate the effort of parish priests and support the parish financially. There are wounds of apartheid I detect amongst the Xhosa and Sotho people.

My impression is of a deeply wounded dignity, sometimes a sense of inferiority, from people who have been given the lowliest residences, education and jobs, and who hail from a culture significantly different from the Western culture, with its own particular modes of operation. The situation is changing, nevertheless the wounds endure. Much healing is needed amongst all the former population groupings.

Again, I like to think, the Holy Spirit guided me to do some formal research in terms of a doctoral thesis which aims to discern the image of God as appropriated by the Xhosa Catholics, in relation to other sources of sacred power. I observe that Xhosa traditions have proved remarkably resilient, as well as that of other "tribes," in all of South Africa.

Healing is a major category in the religious life of the indigenous people, who seek fullness of life, and answers to problems, health, immunity from evil spirits and witchcraft. This is evident amongst my parishioners. If this is not adequately provided for in Christianity or Western medicine, cultural solutions are pursued. They are socialized to seek healing from churches and traditional religion, not only secular health specialists. The migration from rural areas to the city can be said to

multiply the number of problems that arise in the more complex, populated urban areas, and so every day, many black South Africans visit hundreds of thousands of healers of all types. The ancestor belief system remains robust, an enduring social and religious reality.

It was unrealistic of us Western missionaries to assume that proclamation would simply override the cultural patrimony of the indigenous people, especially when Christianity has failed to dialogue fully with culture, and to provide the answers the indigenous folk were seeking. The problem can be summarized as inadequate inculturation, lack of cultural awareness. While the indigenous people may feel comfortable with the dual religious system they abide by, some of the Christian churches perceive theological discord within this dual religious operation.

In contrast to the strong individualism of the Westerners, our parishioners are community-driven people, and believe that people are people through



Photo: Courtesy of St Raphael Catholic Church

other people, a genuine relationship ontology. I have been told that when Africa is sad, Africa sings, and when Africa is happy, Africa sings. Thus it is difficult to persuade the choir to be subdued during the penitential seasons within the Catholic calendar! The unity of the people when singing and celebrating, is remarkable, as the congregation sings, sways and celebrates as a unified whole. Mission to Xhosas and Sothos in Cape Town is about one hundred and fifty years old, and is in response to Jesus declaring "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the message there too" (Mark 1:38).

Fr Pierre Goldie is the parish priest at St Raphael Catholic Church, Khayelitsha, Cape Town, and is an Associate Fellow of the KLC.

Misdirected Cravings

TODD KHUPE

Where I grew up, home and food were at the centre of village life. No matter how far from home we had travelled, parents expected us to be back home by sunset. Under no circumstances would we sleep outside of the family household without our parents' knowledge and approval. Our parents were very strict on whose food we ate. Strictly all our food came from our own household, if not from other relatives or a very trusted neighbour, but not from strangers.

In metropolitan Johannesburg where I now live, homelessness and lack of food are a normal lived reality. I came face to face with this reality 16 years ago. I was enrolled for part-time studies at a Bible College. A nearby church (which has since become my home), was looking for someone to serve in their ministry to homeless people in the local area. I was interviewed and offered the job which was "easy": opening the church gates to the homeless at particular days and times of the week for them to shower and change their clothes. Together with some volunteers, we made lunch for them, engaged them in games, shared the gospel and prayed with them. Attendance progressively increased to numbers that became difficult to manage, especially considering lack of behavioural change from our homeless brothers. As a church, we had hoped to see them responding positively to the offer to place them in shelters, and to referrals to nearby soup kitchens for regular meals. To our dismay, they seemed to prefer life on the streets, and continuing to beg for food. They seemed not to need the services to which we referred them. We found this quite puzzling, but now understand in retrospect, that although we were

providing a service to the needy from a place of love, we were missing their most basic need. We thought they primarily needed food and shelter, yet there was more to it.

On the basis that more than our stomachs long for the pleasure of food, our souls long for the presence of God, we moved our focus away from merely providing food and shelter. We focused on helping them start dealing with deeper heart issues involving different addictions. Firstly, we changed emphasis from providing food for the body to providing food for the soul. Secondly, we focused not on providing physical shelter as a solution to the dangers of living in the streets but eternal security and peace with Christ. Our new insight was that human cravings drive us away from God. In the case of the homeless this craving manifested not as craving for food or shelter, but for money to meet deeper cravings for drugs. As with all of us, their craving was not for "Someone" (God), but for "something" (idol). The worshipping of things, not God, amounts to idolatry. This misdirected craving is reflected in the first sin committed by humanity: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Gen 3:6-7). From this Scripture we learn that the origin of sin was in humanity looking to things of this world to satisfy them apart from the Creator. These misplaced cravings drive most of our ungodly behaviours.

Over the years I have come to understand homelessness as not merely a problem of the individuals living in the streets, but as an expression of our sickness as a society. While the individuals living in the streets need rehabilitation, our society equally needs rehabilitation because it is what breeds homelessness. Such insights led to our church deciding not to focus on all kinds of people living in the streets in our local area but specifically on children from the age of eight to seventeen years old. The aim



Arne Maeland, *Homeless*, Bergen



Timothy Schmalz, *Homeless Jesus* (detail), Barcelona



Christian Rohlf,
The Expulsion from Paradise

was to teach them about life from a biblical worldview, hoping they would be convinced that living in the streets was not God's intention. God's desire is for people to live in families. As a church, we needed collaboration to achieve this

goal. By God's providence we found a Christian rehabilitation centre for young children. We sent for rehabilitation only those children who were willing to leave the streets. It took six months for these children to graduate from the centre. Some of the children came to accept Christ as their saviour and committed to remain in a relationship with him. At graduation, these children were also very excited to be reunified with their families, go back to school and to live a new life.

Little did we and the children know that a great shock awaited us. As we started the process of reunifying the children with their families we were faced with another unwelcome insight. While some of the children might have had families, there was no home to go to. Some families would not accept their children back. They preferred that we, as a church, go out and find a shelter that could accommodate those children. This open rejection by some families was a great shock for both the children and us. We had yet another insight with regard to food and shelter issues. Homelessness doesn't have its roots in poverty but in the hearts of people – their hearts, driven by their cravings, determine the nature of their relationships. A family may have both food and shelter, but no relationships. This insight also helped us to extend our ministry to not only seeking to rehabilitate individuals



Right: Photo: Todd Khupe.
"I Care" Centre

Below: Luigi Nono, Study
for Abandoned



but also their families. After the children came back from the rehabilitation centre, we scheduled family reunification camps for family "therapy." The therapy targeted dealing with cravings that break healthy family relationships. Walking the journey with the families helped us achieve our desired goals as we saw families beginning to embrace their former street children.

In this learning journey of dealing with misplaced cravings for things rather than God we were also confronted with an irony. For some of the former homeless children who had been rejected by their families and for whom we had to find shelter and schools, things took an unexpected turn when they eventually got jobs and their own accommodations. The same families that rejected their children would demand money from them. What was heart-breaking was that in cases where the "children" were willing to help, the money they gave to the families ended up funding diverse cravings of the wider family, giving rise to further breakdown of relationships. This takes us back to the main point of this paper: Our misdirected cravings for things rather than God are the root of societal evils, even when they may manifest as problems in individuals. Beyond the individual, the community needs heart transformation.

Todd Khupe is a Pastoral Worker at Christ Central Soweto (Johannesburg, South Africa) and a former manager of the "I Care" Centre for the rehabilitation of street children. His experiences are related in Kuyafana: Stories from the Street of Love, Faith and Hope (available on Amazon).

Incredibly profound words were spoken directly to me when I first arrived in Haiti in 2017. A Haitian student had heard about my research on exclusion and was anxious for a meeting. My previous study had involved placing practices of exclusion within categories and yet, what I heard from this Haitian was that Haiti, as a nation, felt the exclusion of the entire world. He stated that their only hope was that they “knew” God loved them. I was speechless. Was there not a history of benevolence toward this third world country ... the poorest in the western hemisphere?

I travelled all over Haiti with a team of doctors during my first month in the country. I soon realized that I was expected to be the sole provider of food, gas, lodging, vehicle repairs, etc., and that being given this role was commonplace. While this was difficult for me, being widowed and on a very limited income, I felt as though something so much greater than the loss of personal dignity or finances was about to be made known.

Every time we drove past a mission dwelling, one of the Haitians would point, saying, “They did not come here for us.” I felt offended and kept my feelings to myself, but after hearing the same words



Photo: Karen J. Harding

from various Haitians all over the country, I finally asked, “Why do you say such things? Missionaries have left the comforts of home in the United States and Canada to come here to try to make a difference. Can’t you understand the level of sacrifice?”

Well, I was not prepared for what came next. The Haitians explained that the mission fortresses, with their concrete walls and armed guards at the entrances, housed white people who seldom cared to leave the comforts of their fortresses to buy food at the local markets or to try to



KAREN J. HARDING

get to know neighbouring Haitians. The Haitians were often very upset about the constant expansion of the mission’s territory as a result of government grants being used to purchase more land. The Haitians viewed these missions as vacation spots for an established NGO (non-governmental organization). These missions would build

hospitals, schools and churches but Haitian doctors and teachers working there made miniscule wages. Locals attended the missions’ churches, but little personal ministry occurred.



Photo: Duperval Romane. President Dr Kenel Pierre and VP Karen J. Harding

Everywhere I went in Haiti was a unique experience. Travelling with doctors, I often witnessed malnutrition and myriad bulbous tumours. The Haitian children were exhibiting orange hair and dehydration.

Every food package I had brought along for distribution was devoured very quickly.

While witnessing this incredible suffering, however, I experienced an infectious joy and genuine hospitality emanating from the Haitian people. My heart was full as so many children tried to sit on my lap. Their mothers, who I was told were usually very hesitant to respond to a white woman, embraced me warmly upon receiving scarves for their hair that I had brought with me. These experiences were deeply life changing and I could not help but wonder what may be coming next.

I was told by one of the doctors that I should meet a pastor in Glaise, Haiti. That suited me as I was wondering why I was on this

medical team. I had studied pastoral theology for years, but it seemed as though these doctors wanted me to be aware of everything that was normally under the radar of any international news concerning Haiti. I was informed that ninety-two percent of sexually active women in Haiti had developed cervical cancer and that, with no MRIs, chemotherapy or radiation available, the women would probably only live another ten years. I petitioned our government for help, only to be told that the high degree of cervical cancer is a common problem amongst third world countries and that governments worldwide have simply decided to do nothing. I contacted Health Canada and offered to transport medication necessary to vaccinate children against HPV, but was told that too much money would be lost if proper refrigeration was not available.

It was so easy to become overwhelmed but God always has a plan and my heart was full of love for the Haitian people. We journeyed on as a team and climbed a very steep hill to meet with the pastor and his wife in Glaise.

Back in 1999, I had spent many hours praying for my husband, David, who was on dialysis for glomerulonephritis. He was dying, and as I gathered with a prayer team from Nigeria and prayed silently, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart that I was to be a “type of Moses.” I was determined not to share that with the prayer group but, as soon as I had decided to remain silent, the person next to me spoke out

the same word and later told me that this word from God was for me. I was completely bewildered as to what this could mean, and decided to simply put it “on a shelf.” It seemed to have no relevance to my prayers for my sick husband. I simply felt that God would have to work it all out if I was ever to fill a role that entailed being a “type of Moses.” I chose to just let it be.

What was interesting was reaching the top of the hill in Glaise, and being told to sit in a circle of very



Osvaldo Louis Guglielmi, *Refugees*

rickety metal chairs while waiting for the arrival of the pastor and his wife. My interpreter was seated on my right and as the pastor and his wife sat down amongst us, the pastor turned immediately to the man on his right and spoke in Creole. It was interpreted as, “Just as God sent Moses into Egypt to rescue his people, so today we have a Moses among us!” He then turned and pointed directly at me and, of course, I nearly fell off my chair. The

words spoken to me back in 1999 were being repeated in 2017. What was God up to?

Upon returning to Canada, I was confronted with advertising everywhere for immigrants wanted for positions in the Atlantic provinces. I started attending Immigration Summit meetings here in New Brunswick to promote the benefits of sponsoring Francophone Haitians to live and work in New Brunswick. I was told, however, that the government was not a charity

and that if I could get the Haitians here, there would be lots of interest in the CVs of Haitian nurses and teachers. I was encouraged to inform the Haitians that they simply had to do their research on the website, www.nbjobs.ca, and contact potential employers. It was obvious to me that my government did not understand that Haitians had very little internet, electricity, laptops or money.

I have contacted over fifty businesses, universities, factories, etc., across New Brunswick in the last five years. I have been on the radio and have been interviewed

for television. Our French culture needs augmentation and I have CVs from many French-speaking Haitian citizens who would love to come to New Brunswick to live, work and stay. The Haitians are even willing to pay back our federal government for any expenses incurred in bringing them to Canada as refugees. I was told, however, that Haiti is not a preferred country. It seems that if you are poor, black and from a failed state, as some would argue,



Photo: Alvencio Zamor

you are totally excluded by the rest of the world. How am I to be a type of Moses if the rescue of Haitians is not recognized as critical?

Further evidence in support of Haitians feeling excluded is that donors from Canada can no longer receive tax receipts when donating to Haitians, if the missionary is not able to go there and provide official receipts to detail how the donated money has been spent. Currently, it is impossible to fly into Port au Prince as a single woman with up to six suitcases of humanitarian aid. I would be a prime target for kidnappers and my life would be in danger. Additionally, official receipts are very difficult to obtain in Haiti, even while I am there. Unfortunately, previous donors have now stopped supporting Haitian families because they cannot receive a tax receipt. These people have no concept of the suffering that has arisen as a result.

On several occasions, many years ago, the Lord spoke to me about having a “ministry to the deaf.” Five years have been spent on trying to convince our government to allow Haitians to come to New Brunswick as refugees. Having Francophone Haitians come to New Brunswick makes perfect sense, but it would seem no one is listening. I was told by our government to consider private refugee sponsorship and to “not hold my breath” while waiting for our government to send a plane to pick up Haitians.

This reality became even clearer after writing to the

president of the Dominican Republic. It is estimated that over one million Haitians live in the DR, many illegally. I had requested that the president speak to our Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, about allowing some of the illegal Francophone Haitians to come to New Brunswick to live and work. The UN had requested that the president of the DR issue work permits to the employed illegal Haitians but, instead, immigration police and deportation buses from the DR increased in number. These buses began to arrive at 5am, making it impossible for illegal Haitians to go to work. The buses stayed until 11pm and when Haitians were captured while leaving their homes in search of food, they were put in a detention centre for days, receiving very little care. I was sent live videos of Haitians being beaten by immigration police and there were reports of



Mother Teresa statue (detail), Skopje, Macedonia

phones and passports being stolen. Finally, when there were enough Haitians to fill a bus bound for Haiti, they were boarded and dropped off at the border into Haiti with no money, ID or phones. Gangs often lie waiting at this drop-off point to potentially kidnap helpless Haitians.

It seems like a formidable task to be a “type of Moses” to the Haitians. At times the burden feels very heavy, but I am reminded that this calling is from God and only because it is his heart to rescue Haitians. Therefore, this is entirely God’s work, and I am simply a vessel that can be instrumental in raising awareness concerning

the gravity of this situation. God loves Haitians!

Rev Karen J. Harding is living in New Brunswick, Canada, and is a missionary to Haiti. She has done extensive research in exclusion and authenticity.



Photo: Karen J. Harding



Banksy mural in Ukraine

UKRAINTIAN JOURNEY

May 2023 – Michael Shipster

It is only on the second day of our visit to Ukraine that the impact of the war starts to come home to us. Before this, apart from patriotic posters on billboards, and street statues protected by sandbags and steel mesh, Lviv – our first stop on the way to Kyiv – could be any other elegant eastern European city on a sunny spring day. As we stroll through the cobbled Old Town, we come across a funeral cortège approaching a Catholic church. A bell is tolling, there is a choir, pallbearers are carrying three coffins draped in the blue and yellow national flag, covered with flowers. A procession of mourners is following, some in army uniform, others in black. A crowd has gathered, some onlookers are in tears. One woman, mopping her eyes, tells us it is the third funeral today at this church. “These young men, it’s so terrible,” she says. Later, as we board our train to Kyiv, we see a young couple embracing on the platform – he in uniform with a heavy kitbag, she clinging to his neck. They say little

to one another and break apart only moments before the train leaves. She runs along the platform mouthing words towards the carriage window before the train outpaces her and she stops and waves a handkerchief.

I am travelling with two journalists, one a friend from thirty years ago when we were both covering the transition to democracy in South Africa, he for his London newspaper, I for the British Foreign Office. This is our first visit to Ukraine since the Russian invasion on 24 February last year. We are going to see for ourselves the impact of the war and get an idea of what Ukrainians are fighting for and what outcome they expect.

In Kyiv, as in Lviv, appearances are initially deceptive. On the surface, this seems a normal city going about its daily business: people strolling, traffic flowing, restaurants and street cafés open and full. But, as we

soon realise, the war is everywhere, the main subject of conversation, affecting every part of peoples’ lives, their hopes, expectations and prospects. Even if the physical signs – ruined buildings, burned-out tanks, cemeteries – are mostly out of sight, the war hangs over the country like a cloud.

If Putin’s main aim in launching this attack was to re-assert Russian control over Ukraine, to subjugate and cow its people, it is already clear he has failed. From young men on the streets, professionals in their workplaces, government officials and pensioners shopping in the markets, the mood is one of stubborn defiance, of anger and outrage, often shading into implacable and voluble hatred. Not just for Putin and his close circle – military chiefs, security operatives, oligarchs and ideologues – but for all Russians.

As we now know, the intelligence on which Putin relied before launching this invasion –



that Ukrainians would welcome Russian forces as liberators, freeing them from Ukrainian fascists and Western hegemony – was utterly mistaken. Ukrainians have fought harder and better than expected, President Zelensky has proved to be a doughty and inspirational war leader, a brilliant communicator, both with fellow Ukrainians and the outside world. Foreign support for Ukraine has been more generous and sustained than Putin expected, enabling Ukrainian forces to inflict heavy losses of men and materiel on the Russian invaders, necessitating among other responses tough new conscription laws to replenish the ranks. The effects of these setbacks on Russian morale and commitment to the war, and support for Putin, are hard to assess – such is the closed nature of Russia these days – but may prove to be his undoing. Historically, Russian leaders who fail in war seldom survive. But one of the consequences is beyond doubt: it has united Ukrainians of all political, religious, regional and ethnic backgrounds, to forge the very nation that Putin and his Russian nationalists deny ever existed or could have any legitimacy.

Unsurprisingly, as we travel north of Kyiv, this public mood of defiance and enmity towards Russia is strongest in the villages that were occupied by Russian forces for a few weeks during the initial attempt to seize Kyiv. Here we also encounter another sentiment: contempt. Not only were Russian soldiers brutal and cruel, people tell us, they were stupid and incompetent. They got lost, they ran out of fuel, their tanks got stuck in marshy ground, they didn't seem to be following an organised strategy. In the



Mikhailovski Square, Kyiv

local people had vanished. We ask whether there was any collaboration. “Perhaps. Some people don't know which side they're on. But not many, and they disappeared.” What

happened to them? A shrug by way of response. “Dogs die like dogs.”

Fr Andriy, the Orthodox priest in Bucha, meets us in the crypt of his church. In the first two months of the war, he saw the aftermath of some of the worst atrocities. He presided over the burials of local inhabitants, many of them his parishioners, including over a hundred of them in a mass grave behind his church. As he relates these horrors, he cuts a dignified, austere, thoughtful figure. If he feels anger or hatred towards Russians, he keeps it under control. We ask him about the stance of the Russian Orthodox Church. How could it condone and encourage such acts of barbarism? How could the head of the church in Moscow, Metropolitan Kirill, declare this to be a Holy War, assuring Russian soldiers that if they die in battle their sins will be forgiven and they will go to heaven?

Fr Andriy says we should understand the character of the Russian Orthodox Church. It has long been a department of state, a tool of the Russian government. Under the Tsars it served the autocracy. Although initially suppressed after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, Stalin revived it during the Great Patriotic War to help defeat Hitler. After victory in 1945,

Stalin allowed the church to continue to exist,

radioactive zone around the former nuclear power station in Chernobyl, Russian troops dug trenches, slicing through the protective topsoil to toxic layers below, in which they made their bivouacs and slept.

The soldiers were amazed that local people were unfriendly. “We've come to liberate you,” the advance units shouted. “We don't need to be liberated, thank you. Go back to Russia and tell Putin to **** himself,” came the reply, using Ukraine's most famous defiant expletive, now to be seen everywhere on posters and even on postage stamps. In Bucha, when Russian troops belatedly became aware that local civilians were using mobile phones to report on troop movements and locations, bringing down airstrikes on concentrated army columns, they went on a rampage of slaughter and revenge.

Some local residents express withering pity for the young occupying soldiers, far from home. “They didn't know why they were here. They were amazed at the way we live. Our houses seemed luxurious to them – air conditioners and even inside toilets! They ran out of supplies, they became hungry, they turned savage.” By the time the Russians pulled out, leaving behind their dead comrades and ruined vehicles, any vestige of sympathy from



Radioactive ghost city of Prypiat', near Chernobyl

but within tight controls. Its leaders were in the pay of the state and it was infiltrated by the KGB. While the older generation of Russians was permitted to

practise, religious observance for the young was discouraged and the organised spread of religious belief was illegal. Now, Putin, the former KGB operative, once again raises up the church, but only as an organ of state, in support of his rule and this criminal war.

The day before our visit to Bucha we witness a street demonstration at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, one of the largest religious compounds in Kyiv, used by the Russian Orthodox Church. A group shouting “Russian priests go home to Russia!” is protesting against the use of the monastery for pro-Russia propaganda and subversion. Standing between them and members of the Russian Orthodox community gathered at the gates is a detachment of Ukrainian police.

We ask Father Andriy what he makes of this. He replies he is proud of the role of the Ukrainian police in protecting public freedoms. “This is in the European democratic tradition; and we want to be part of Europe. This could not possibly happen in Moscow. Our differences are not about faith – there are many sincere believers in Russia – but politics; about how the church is led and exploited.” Is there scope for reconciliation? “Only if Russia, and the Church as its accomplice, are able to admit their crimes and atone for them,” he says. “Putin openly admires Stalin,



New graves, Irpin Cemetery, among them Sergei Smirnov, aged 28

merely that “Here in 1941–43 over 100,000 residents of Kiev and prisoners of war were executed by German-fascist invaders.”

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, new monuments

to the victims have been erected, but controversy continues over how to commemorate Babi Yar. Some of the memorials have been defaced and vandalised, motivated by either anti-Semitism or anti-Soviet feeling. When I visit, I notice the plaque on the Soviet monument is stained by some liquid. It might be urine.

whose crimes exceeded those of the Nazis. No wonder that Russian forces continue to commit such atrocities now.”

In the west of Kyiv there is a commemorative park which reaches back to horrors committed eighty years ago in an earlier war: Babi Yar, scene of the worst single atrocity in the Second World War. When invading German troops captured Kyiv in September 1941, they rounded up the local Jewish population, took them to the edge of a deep ravine, ordered them to undress and shot each one with pistols and machine guns. Some 33,000 were murdered in 24 hours, the bodies piled in layers until the ravine was almost full. In the following two years, until the Red Army liberated Kyiv in late 1943, a further 70,000 people were murdered and dumped in Babi Yar: more Jews, captured Soviet prisoners of war, Roma people, the mentally ill, local troublemakers.

A different kind of defacement occurred soon after the start of the Russian invasion a year ago. Three Russian missiles, aimed at the adjacent 385-metre telecommunications tower – the tallest structure in Kyiv – damaged the memorial park. The tower, however, although now leaning slightly, is still standing: a monument to the reckless brutality of these new invaders from the East and their trashing of the common history of their countries.

In 1961, the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko published his poem “Babi Yar” to protest against anti-Semitism and the Soviet Government’s failure to commemorate the massacre. Eventually, in 1976 a monument was erected on the site. But, consistent with Soviet reluctance to give any special emphasis or status to victims of the Jewish Holocaust, the inscription reads

to the victims have been erected, but controversy continues over how to commemorate Babi Yar. Some of the memorials have been defaced and vandalised, motivated by either anti-Semitism or anti-Soviet feeling. When I visit, I notice the plaque on the Soviet monument is stained by some liquid. It might be urine.

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During our visit, many refer to the war as attempted genocide. Putin, they say, wants to eradicate the Ukrainian nation: its culture, language and identity. Russian missiles indiscriminately target residential areas, hospitals and schools. Their soldiers rape and murder, without mercy or remorse. “They want to destroy us all,” they say. “How is this different from Nazi genocide?” My journalist friends, who on their way to Ukraine visited the Nazi concentration and death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau, insist they have seen what real genocide looks like, and this war does not qualify. They agree, of course,



Father Andriy

this is a brutal, criminal war, but question whether the Russians plan to murder all Ukrainians. There is as yet no new Babi Yar. But this is a discussion that can have no conclusion. Our areas of agreement are far more important than this semantic disagreement.

Our final stop is Odesa, Ukraine's principal Black Sea port. We travel through the night in a comfortable sleeper train and arrive refreshed at dawn. Apart from the absence of tourists, and the closure of the famous Potemkin Steps leading down to the harbour, it seems uncannily peaceful, a good place to bring a family on holiday.

It is here that we try to bring the experiences and insights we have gained to some kind of conclusion. This is not like other wars between deadly enemies, where it is possible

to imagine clear victory or defeat. Through this reckless military adventure, Putin has inadvertently but irrevocably driven Ukraine into the European embrace. He has lost, probably forever, the chance to bring Ukraine back into the Russian fold. But, on its own and even with substantial Western assistance, Ukraine is unlikely to be able to achieve complete military victory.

Russian military tactics in the eastern and northern areas have been brutally destructive, scarred by individual atrocities and systematic war crimes. Other parts of the country, however, have been

relatively unaffected. This is far from total war; but it could still be the precursor to one. What Ukrainians are fighting for is obvious. What Russian soldiers are fighting for is not. Russia cannot possibly subjugate Ukraine, but nor is it likely to lose. Equally, while Ukraine will surely survive as a country it is unlikely to realise all its war aims: withdrawal of all Russian forces back to the 1991 borders (returning Crimea therefore to Ukraine), Russian reparations for war damage, punishment of those, including Putin, responsible for war crimes, and reliable guarantees of Ukraine's



Borodyanka (with Banksy mural bottom left)



Taras Shevchenko monument

future territorial integrity and security.

A nuclear power cannot be completely defeated without risking recourse to nuclear weapons. That after all is the whole point of having them: Mutually Assured Destruction, the Mexican Standoff. At the same time, Putin cannot back down. Otherwise, he risks being ousted. Staying in power is the war aim he will abandon last. He is likely therefore to plough on, in the belief that the Russian people can bear prolonged pain, loss and international isolation, outlasting the Ukrainians; also,

that Western support for Ukraine will weaken, perhaps accelerated by victory for Donald Trump in the presidential election next year. In such circumstances Putin might hope to force Ukraine to the negotiating table, enabling Russia to hang on to its territorial gains, including Crimea. He might secure an undertaking that Ukraine will never join NATO and its territory will be a demilitarised zone. Russia will refuse to pay war damages and cannot be compelled to do so; there will be no prosecutions by the International Criminal Court. Russia could probably live with

international sanctions in some form. In other words, a result that could be represented as victory.

Such an outcome is by no means certain or even likely. Most of the conceivable scenarios for the war are dangerous and potentially

catastrophic for all parties: Ukraine, Russia, the West, the "international rules-based order," the rest of the world. One could be a "forever war" between Russia and Ukraine, always teetering on the brink of dangerous escalation. Or Russia sinking deeper into pariah status, becoming in effect a rogue state, intent on destabilising the comfortable peace to which the West aspires; meanwhile acquiring by whatever means possible allies in the global south, where existing suspicions of US and Western hegemony offer a good environment for Russian influence to spread. Or worst of all, perhaps, a situation

where the Russian Federation – the present rump of the former Tsarist and Soviet empires – begins to disintegrate. What would happen then to the six thousand or so nuclear weapons Russia now possesses? What temptations would there be for Russia’s neighbours, especially China, to capitalise on Moscow’s loss of control, especially in the resource-rich, sparsely populated Far East?

A week after my return to London I attend the premiere of



Remembering the fallen



Field of Remembrance, Maidan, Kyiv

a documentary film about the war, *Freedom on Fire*, directed by the Ukrainian Oscar-nominated filmmaker Evgeny Afineevsky. It is bleak and harrowing, recording through the eye-witness accounts of mostly women and children some of the worst atrocities and suffering of this last year. During the discussion afterwards, one participant, going against the flow of other comments,

questions the role and motives of the West in supporting Ukraine. He cites the genocide of Uighurs in China, and of Rohingya Muslims in his own country, Myanmar. These killings, he says, have been going on for longer and are on a larger scale than those in Ukraine. Yet this war between two European nations has all but obliterated news coverage of those others. Furthermore, the plight of Ukraine attracts a disproportionate slice of Western humanitarian support, including for refugees. Could this be, he

asks, because donor nations like Britain identify more closely with white-skinned humanitarian causes than those involving brown skins? Are our choices and policies driven by racism?

After the questioner sits down, I put up my hand. I agree these are important questions, but this is not the time and place to debate them. We have just seen a truthful, highly personal film by a Ukrainian director bearing witness to what has been committed in his own country, to ensure these crimes are not forgotten and Ukraine continues to get the

support it needs. The reason the plight of the Ukraine war resonates so strongly with people in Britain is because Russia poses a clear threat also to Europe, and possibly the wider world. If only this film could be shown in Russia where Russian minds are closed by official lies and distortions to the reality of what is happening.

To conclude: is it possible that a fair and lasting peace might be achieved for Ukraine, free to choose its own destiny in Europe, without threatening Russia’s own core interests? I fervently hope so. I have the clearest memory from our visit of the hopes expressed by brave, talented, humane, open-minded Ukrainians we met. They deserve a good future, certainly some better luck than history has so far allotted their blood-soaked land over the centuries. Conversely, if Russia prevails in Ukraine, the defences of all countries against brutal subjugation by a more powerful adversary will be profoundly weakened.

To end with, “Testament” by Taras Shevchenko, Ukraine’s nineteenth century national poet:

When I die, O bury me
In a tomb raised high
Above the rolling steppe
In my beloved Ukraine
Where I can see the wide
And mighty Dnieper
Its rugged shores
And hear its roaring waters

When from Ukraine the Dnieper brings
The blood of enemies down towards
The sea, then can I leave
These hills and fruitful fields –
I will depart and fly beyond
Unto the home of God,
And then I’ll pray But till that time
My God I do not know.

So bury me, then stir yourselves
And split your heavy chains.
Bless with blood of enemies
The freedom you have gained.
And in the great new family,
A family that’s free,
With a soft and kindly voice
Also remember me.

Michael Shipster, CMG, OBE, is a former British diplomat whose overseas postings included the Soviet Union, India, South Africa and the US. Translation of “Testament” and photographs by the author.



Félix Vallotton, *Landscape of Ruins and Fires*

REFUGEES' WELCOME: The Integrative Power of Community Meals

CLAIRE FENNER CRAWLEY

It is amazing the difference an invitation to the dinner table makes. As I walk into Hope Chapel, Bristol, in early March 2023, I see, hear and smell the instant and unmistakable buzz of a community preparing dinner. I am greeted at the door by the project leader, Chloe, and enter a foyer of people I don't know who are speaking in a different tongue. But there is no time for the awkwardness of conversing across languages with little context. I am immediately handed an apron and ushered into salad preparation with two young women from Ukraine who are transformed from strangers to kitchen mates. Ukrainian and English intermingle as our vegetable chopping provides the vehicle for broken anecdotes of looking for work and housing in Britain, having recently fled the war: an alien concept to my settled British life encased in the familiarity of a hundred conversations leaning on a kitchen counter.

I have had the great pleasure in the past year of working on two projects looking to unleash a narrative and culture of welcome across churches in the UK. "Welcome Hubs" have sprung up in churches around the country to welcome resettled refugees, especially from Ukraine. The Good Faith Partnership, a social consultancy specialising in building cross-sector relationships between faith groups and the public and private sector, has supported local authorities to invest in networks of church-based Welcome Hubs as a vital component of a national response to Ukraine which signals support, refuge and welcome. Alongside the usual and crucial suite of health, language and schooling provision for Ukrainian refugees, we have argued

that local Welcome Hubs, offering a place of safety, friendship, conversation and food, are not a nice extra but an integral part of supporting Ukrainians to build confidence and a new life in this country.

There is a deep theological conviction here: in a physicalist, service-based economy, focused on fulfilling the needs of refugees treated as rational economic humans, the inversion of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to embrace the spirituality and relational flourishing in the top tiers is the key to unlocking confidence within the lower levels of work and housing. Jesus teaches that "man shall not live on bread alone" (Matt 4:4 NIV) and in the Bristol context we have found that prioritising physical spaces which signal home, comfort and community above service provision signal this important truth. Ukrainians are treated as guests at a dinner table, equal members of the community each with their assets to bring: stories of their week; conversational skill; caring enquiry across the table about their friends from Hong Kong who make up the majority of the Hub volunteer team.

So, the community is about more than the material provision of food, yet the cooked meal forms such a key part of the experience. During the cost-of-living crisis of Winter 2022–23, Good Faith Partnership's warmwelcome.uk campaign supported the proliferation of more than 4,000 "Warm Welcome Spaces" across the UK. We have found that these spaces and the Welcome Clubs that offer regular hot meals are by far the most likely to attract and maintain a genuine, committed



Osvaldo Louis Guglielmi, *Relief Blues*

community of friendship, bridging social and cultural differences. What is it about these shared meals which has such an important effect? Whilst, sadly, food banks flourish across the country, there is a marked difference between the social and spiritual dynamics of a shared community meal and the distribution of a food parcel, though both essentially provide material nourishment to the receiver.

I believe that there are inherent dynamics in the physical sharing of food which foster and witness to important aspects of the presence of Christ on earth. I have already touched on the levelling effect of the many coded roles in the preparation and serving of a meal. In a space where cultural and language dynamics instantly cause a power imbalance, the quite literal working of diverse sets of hands and feet creates myriad roles in one social body, demonstrating Paul's assertion that the body of Christ is strongest when "there are many parts, but one body" with each part, stronger or weaker, embracing its particular role (1 Cor 12:20 NIV). Differing cultural norms might create temporary moments of friction (or more often, laughter), but the body is united by its common goal to serve one another. For Ukrainians frustrated by their dependence on their British host families, these meals provide one moment in the week where they are able to feel an equal claim to the common table.

But is the one body of the one Lord that Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 12 actually represented and known in these settings?

The Welcome Hubs have had to hold a fine balance of expressing their deep faith in Jesus whilst providing a safe and appropriate welcome to all, not least because of their contractual relationship with the Council who refer Ukrainians to them for community and spiritual care which is open to people of all faiths or none. Along with the Hub leaders, I have found this a difficult tension to hold: representing the true character of

the Lord who enlivens, calls and unites the church community hosting the Hub whilst not insisting on worship of Jesus as a requirement of the space. Here I have found 20th century German theologian and pastor Ernst Käsemann's reflections on the Lord's Supper a helpful guide. In his recently translated *Church Conflicts* ([Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022], 125) he argues that our spiritual state in coming to the Communion table as "Guests of the Crucified" is not as important as the One whom we find there. As the Crucified One, Christ's company at his table must include the crucified of this earth: "Where guests of the Crucified gather, it always occurs as a fundamentally open community ... To put it sharply: where Christians come together, the happy home life must be broken through." This assertion does not spring from a panentheistic understanding of the crucified ones of the earth actually comprising Christ's presence. Rather, in the apocalyptic unveiling of the true nature of Christ's lordship opposed to the hegemonic and exclusive powers which rule the earth, the passion and humiliation of Golgotha and its disarming power is the marker which distinguishes Christ from all other lords and gods, and so also that which marks Christ's community.

It is true that the gathering of the displaced and discombobulated around a dinner table has a naturally humbling effect. Relative strangers struggle to converse in broken English and lack the natural sense of humour and cultural quirks which shared kinship provides. Yet this community is united by mutual love, and humble need. The act of entering into a shared multicultural space demonstrates the willingness to admit the need for company and connection, for *all* guests. Around the dinner table, the shared toil of preparing the meal levels the Ukrainian, Hong Kong and British participants to "guest" status. A shared meal demonstrates in physical space the hospitality and ministry of the One who leaves his table open to all.

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THE BIG PICTURE



Photo: Bernice Gollop. Christmas dinner at Westbury-on-Trym Welcome Hub

PREACHING THE BIBLE
FOR ALL ITS WORTH:

Galatians

Why is Paul so angry? That might be the first question to ask for anyone wishing to preach Galatians for all its worth. For one thing Paul's often scathing language for his opponents and his reproachful tone toward the Galatians can be more than a little off-putting to a modern audience. He's not the only one that wishes he could change his tone with the Galatians (4:20)! And yet the apostle's angry tone makes it clear that something crucially important is at stake. Knowing that his proclamation of the gospel is under attack, Paul goes into a full mother-bear defence of young and vulnerable congregations threatened by false teaching. This means that Paul's passionate letter to the Galatians is a great place to focus on exactly what the good news of the gospel is – and what it isn't. Five themes stand out.

We may begin with **the importance of the Gentiles** in Paul's understanding of the gospel. For this apostle to the Gentiles (1:16), the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus is really only good news if it is extended freely to Gentiles apart from "works of the law" such as circumcision (2:3; 5:2, 6; 6:12, 15), the food laws (2:11–14), and the Jewish calendar (4:10–11). It's crucial for Paul that God always intended to bless the Gentiles *as Gentiles*, not just as converts to Judaism. Indeed, this is essential to

an understanding of the gospel (3:9; Gen 12:3). Yet why is this the case?

This brings us to the importance of **the promises to Abraham**. Preaching Galatians is an excellent opportunity to bring your congregation into the larger story of God's overarching plan for redemption. As Paul makes clear, God always intended to bless the Gentiles in the same way

basis of their salvation.

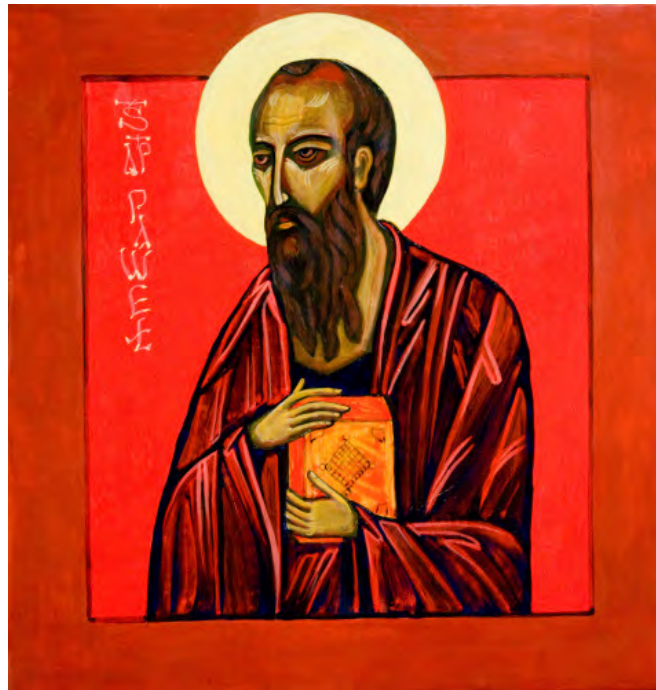
Paul doesn't stop there. At another and deeper level, Paul argues that God's people are blessed through their **union with Christ**. They are "sons of God" (that is to say, heirs who receive the promised inheritance) not only "through faith" but also "in Christ" (that is, by virtue of their union with him, 3:26). Paul makes this point in a surprising way.

He takes Abraham's "seed" as a reference to the one seed, Jesus Christ, and not as a general reference to Abraham's descendants. This means that the inheritance comes to believers because they are united with Christ, sharing with him in his inheritance because they share with him in his death and resurrection.

Here we come to the heart of Paul's understanding of the gospel. For Paul the death and resurrection of Jesus marks **the transition from the present evil age to the**

inheritance of the new creation.

Crucially, believers share in that transition insofar as they share in Christ: "For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (2:20). Paul insists that believers have died to the things that belong to the present evil age, *including existence under the law* (5:24; 6:14). And because the



Elżbieta Dudziak, *Paul of Tarsus*

that he blessed Abraham, that is, through faith (3:6–9). The law did come in later, of course, but it was always meant to be temporary and parenthetical. It was a necessary pause in the outworking of God's promise to Abraham "until faith came" (3:25), that is, until in the fullness of time justifying faith in Jesus (and not the various works of the law) became the distinguishing mark of God's people and the clear



Jacob Wexler, *The Exodus*

resurrection life of Christ and the Spirit is already at work in them, it is actually possible for them to fulfil the law (by love!) without actually being under it (5:16, 18; 6:15).

One important and very helpful way to express this transition from the present evil age to the new creation is in terms of **the new exodus**. Paul was deeply influenced by Isaiah’s vision of the new exodus, of which he was a “herald of the good news” (Isa 52:7–53:1). This works its way out in numerous ways in Galatians. God’s promise to Abraham is ultimately fulfilled in a Moses-like coming of “Faith” (3:23–25) that redeems God’s people from Egypt-like bondage “under the law” (and “sin” and “the elementals,” 3:22–23; 4:3, 9) to exodus-like freedom, sonship and inheritance (4:5, 7; 5:1). Even so, God’s people have not yet come into their full inheritance of the kingdom of God (5:21). This means that they are in the wilderness, as it were, having already been redeemed from bondage but not yet having received their full inheritance. They are, in fact, being “led by the Spirit” (in the path of Spirit-enabled love, as it turns out) just as the Israelites were led by the cloud on their way to the promised land (5:18; cf. Rom 8:14; Luke 4:1).

As far as Paul is concerned, then, his opponents have completely failed to

understand the gospel because they have failed to understand the true significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The death of Jesus means that believers have died to sin and the law. The resurrection of Jesus means that they are already living, walking, and being led by the Spirit in the path of law-fulfilling love. That his opponents could not just miss the significance (that is, the good news) of the gospel for themselves but also attempt to deny it to the Galatians was no minor matter for this apostle to the Gentiles. It was an infuriating attempt to shut these Gentiles out from the blessings that come through hearing with faith and not the works of the law (3:2–5; 4:17). Hence this white-hot little letter that gets to the heart of the gospel.

SOME RECOMMENDED READING

Matthew S. Harmon, *Galatians*. Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021). Author of an insightful work on Paul’s use of Isaiah in Galatians (*She Must and Shall Go Free: Paul’s Isaianic Gospel in Galatians* [Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter,

2010]), Harmon combines scholarly acumen and pastoral wisdom in the interpretation of every verse. The commentary concludes with over one hundred pages on “Biblical and Theological Themes.”

Todd Wilson, *Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living*. Preaching the Word. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013). This is an accessible pastoral commentary with helpful notes reflecting deep learning in the back. Wilson preaches what he practices: each of the twenty-six chapters is a rich homily on Scripture. You may wish to begin or supplement your study of Galatians by reading a chapter each day over the course of a month.

Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019). For sheer breadth and depth of faithful scholarship, this commentary is unsurpassed in its explication of the original context of Galatians and its engagement with the vast literature on this letter. It also includes “A Closer Look” at numerous topics (e.g., justification, magic, Paul and the law, pregnant and nursing mothers, and circumcision) and consideration of current social and political realities (in the “Bridging Horizons” sections).



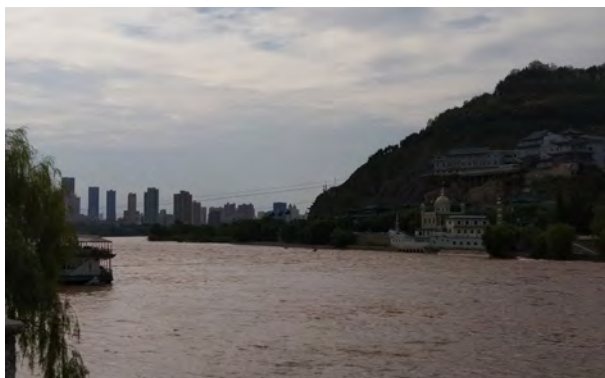
Claude Vignon, *Saint Paul*

Morning Star Encounter

MEGAN GREENWOOD

I didn't usually go for walks at 4am. However, on this particular morning I found myself noticing the shadows of trees being cast by the streetlights onto the grey, broad, cement sidewalk as I made my way down it in the cool, pre-dawn air. The public square that, every night, blasted a cacophony of congested, competing songs from different groups of dancing grannies engaged in their nightly exercising ritual was silent as I passed by. The main road that usually huffed and puffed with buses, cars, bicycles, three-wheelers, honking horns and human footsteps was quiet, except for an occasional purring taxi. In a city housing over three million beating hearts, I found a surprisingly spacious solitude as I made my way to meet a friend.

It wasn't usual for us to rendezvous in dark, pre-dawn hours! But this wasn't a usual morning: it was Ramadan. My friend was *DongXiang* 东乡. He belonged to a predominantly Muslim Mongolic ethnic minority group found in northwest China. Each year he entered into the rhythm and ritual of the month-long fast that wove together the fabric of his religious and cultural community. This year, I and another colleague from the university where I taught, decided to accompany him for a day of fasting. It meant eating together before sunrise,



Yellow River with mosque

which was when the day's fast would begin.

I turned down the street towards the restaurant where we were meeting and caught sight of steam rising from a huge cauldron behind the counter at the back end of it. This was a noodle restaurant, serving freshly-boiled, hand-stretched noodles of an array of thicknesses in a bowl of flavourful broth, sprinkled with cilantro, Chinese radishes, scallions, deep red chilli oil and shavings of beef. This city, my Chinese "hometown," was renowned for this dish. True locals ate a bowl of beef noodles every morning for breakfast. They claimed that eating it any later in the day meant the broth was no longer fresh. As a *waiguoren* 外国人 (foreigner), I grew up thinking pasta – my nearest childhood equivalent to noodles – was eaten for "lunch" or "supper" more readily than pre-sunrise meals. But this morning, aided by chopsticks, I slurped my way through its weighty warmth.

I'd be lying if I said I could recall the conversation we



Table setting



Beef noodles

had, as this meal took place about five years ago. What's more striking to me now is reflecting on how this young gentleman's path crossed and shaped mine. He was one of hundreds of university students I taught, and one of many I had befriended as I witnessed their university experience. He grew up in a predominantly Muslim autonomous region, so entering university meant being thrust into a space that more acutely highlighted his "differences" and minority status. This required him to frequently navigate cross-cultural interactions with, and stereotypes and assumptions held by, Han ethnic majority classmates. Although usually well-meaning, most of them had had limited exposure to cultural differences and had been fed a somewhat romanticised, essentialised view of China's fifty-six recognised ethnic minorities. Perhaps that alone created common ground between us, as my existence in China was an ongoing cross-cultural dance and misidentification was common. ("No, not all foreigners are American. No, not all South Africans are black. Yes, my mother tongue is English – and



Chinese mosque turret in a Muslim autonomous region

yes – I come from Africa.”)

In addition, both of us were pursuing our respective faiths in a context where the predominant flavour of the day was – and is – atheism. Through his actions, not words, he began to open my eyes to what

this meant for him. When extra-curricular activities were hosted at certain spaces by me or other foreign teachers, he was absent. This puzzled me – especially in an indirect, highly relational context. What did it mean? Eventually it dawned on me that we were choosing non-*halaal* spaces. No wonder he was absent. Enthused by my insight, I tried to be more sensitive. While other students took extra cookies we’d baked together back to their dormitories as snacks, he politely refused them; they were not *halaal*. This, despite my explanation that I had specifically purchased *halaal* butter, in the hope that they would pass as acceptable. I grew to know how food could exclude or include. That awareness emerged gradually, along with a clearer sense of what being a people “set apart” could look like. I watched the choices he made, including his annual devotion to partake in Ramadan, which he described as helping him to recentre towards creator God. I saw it too as a pursuit of holiness.

By the time his final undergraduate year came, I more readily recognised the 清真 (*halaal*) sign on restaurant windows that designated them as welcoming spaces for him. They’d become our meeting grounds. It was also in his final year of studies that the idea to join him in



Outside a restaurant

his fasting emerged, leading to this moment of slurping noodle broth together before sunrise. Soon enough, sunlight replaced streetlights and tree shadows. Full stomachs replaced full bowls. We parted ways, heading into the activities that lay before us that day. I was extra careful to not let food or water touch my lips as the day passed by.

We bookended the day with another shared meal, reconvening after sunset at a gate of the university. My friend led us down a skinny side-street to a spot I would not have found alone. We squished into a tiny corner upstairs and were brought a large platter to be shared. Literally translated as “Big Plate Chicken,” it included belt noodles – their name derived from their generous thickness – slices of potatoes, veggies, a whole chicken cut into pieces, and a medley of Chinese spices all swimming in the characteristic red chilli oil which had many a time left its signature flick on my clothing.

Tummies full, we departed. I made my way back towards my apartment. The grannies were dancing vigorously.

The night’s traffic was diminishing, but not yet at its 4am low level. I wove my way between clusters of students holding phones, snacks, or plastic packets with cups of *boba* tea in their hands that cast swinging shadows on the sidewalk.



Cold noodles

I was mindful of the fact that my tomorrow would not follow the same rhythm as my friend’s. Once again, he’d encounter the fresh dawn air. And again. And again. I would not. At least, not in that way. Nevertheless, I still carry with me the essence of his *imago Dei*, clasp chopsticks and sharing space at a table of common ground – one where there’s always room for one more.

With a life-long interest and endless curiosity about humanity, Megan Greenwood (www.mgcoaching.org) enjoys empowering people and journeying with them as they discover how to more deeply live from their core. All photographs by the author.

My Kids Eat Chicken Bones: Black Parenting 101

DAMBUDZO MUSHAMBI

It took a while, but we finally got there.

My kids, well, the two oldest at the least, now heartily munch on their bones whenever we have chicken

for supper. Not that it needs saying, but don't worry, it's all done under adult supervision. My wife and I had a good number of conversations about this, and we finally landed on giving the kids a choice – if they want to, they can gnaw on the bones; if they don't, that's also fine. No shaming either way.

Now, why would shaming be involved in this at all?

Okay, let me school you. Real talk. Among most of the black African people I know, you don't stop at eating only the meat on the bone. The bone itself is fair game. Not crunching down on that cartilage, and then at the bone to get at the marrow, is like you're leaving food on your plate. And that's a no-no. It can be considered "posh" if you leave the bones on your plate intact. I laugh every time I watch cooking shows like *Top Chef*, when they talk about seasoning, grilling and eating bone marrow, as if that's something new and revolutionary. Maybe to some, I guess. It's been normal for me and my family for ages though. Go figure.

A friend of mine wrote a song called "Black Excellence 600." One of the things he points out in that song is how African Americans made the most of the little they had. Chitlins (cooked and seasoned pig intestines) are the result of someone trying to make the best out of a bad situation. In a meat-scarce situation, when you get meat with bones, trust me, those bones aren't coming out of it in one piece. That's why many black folk in Africa (and

other peoples across the world) chew their bones, even though their economic situations might have changed and they don't strictly need to anymore.

My kids have struggled to pick up my mother tongue, Shona. That's mostly my fault, but with being away from Zimbabwe, they haven't had too many spaces among peers in which to learn the language. With that linguistic barrier in place already, I don't want to add one more thing that will create a degree of separation between them and other people when we go back home for visits. Also, like good missionary children, they need to be able to fit in everywhere. Some folks chew their bones. These kids need to be ready for that.

On the other side of the equation, for my English South African wife, it's something quite odd to gnaw at your bones. You pick at the meat on your bones using a knife and fork. Maybe, at a push, you pick up the bone and bite around it. But you leave the cartilage and the bones intact. It's only proper. While it would be considered posh and wasteful among my people for you to leave your bones intact, for my wife it would be considered rude to handle your food so much, let alone crunch on the bones.

So, we really had to try to navigate this cultural conversation around food without normalising one type of behaviour or shaming the other. Both alternatives had to be equally on the table as viable options. We looked at it as loving and appreciating one another, accepting our differences without shaming, or making anyone feel lesser than.



Peter Binoit, *Letter Pastry*

34



Adolph Bernard Meyer, *Skeleton of a hen*

DOES ANY OF THIS REALLY MATTER?

It does, if we are serious about offering warm, cross-cultural hospitality that welcomes all sorts of folk and embraces the differences that make people interesting. Look, if bone-crunching and bone marrow of all sorts isn't your thing, then it isn't. I'm not sure who Paul in this equation would label the "weak" or the "strong" brother or sister in Christ (Rom 14). But it seems to me that those who crunch their bones ought to crunch them heartily unto the Lord and without shame or shaming others; those who do not, don't have to. Surely there's room enough in our hearts and at our tables for all types?

Talking about the food one eats and *how* one eats that food opens further interrelated questions of *with whom* you eat and

why. By what we serve and how we curate our hospitality, we determine the behaviours that are appropriate and who can feel welcome in that place. In this way, hospitality becomes an expression of power, and all expressions of power can be moulded to reflect the

loving, self-giving and vulnerable service that Jesus modelled for us. There is, of course, immense freedom in Christ regarding what we eat, and with whom we eat it (Matt 9:9–13; Mark 7:1–23; 1 Cor 8; Gal 2:11–21). This freedom, as with all our other freedoms in Christ, is to be exercised wisely, charitably and lovingly so that food doesn't become yet another source of shame or exclusion.

Food and the spaces in which food is offered and consumed are entangled in all sorts of politics and cultural hang-ups, including the type and quality of the fare on offer, as Michael Pollan has written about extensively. Food is shot through with complications that make it a veritable minefield as one navigates



William Brassey Hole, *Jesus Summoning Zacchaeus the Publican*



Moretto da Brescia, *Supper in the House of Simon Pharisee*

what precisely constitutes good table manners in a multicultural context. This is to say nothing about issues of where food is sourced, as well as questions of the ethics of consuming certain kinds of foods and the challenge that presents for offering hospitality.

Offence can easily be taken or given over whether one chews on bones or not, and that is one of many possible ways in which we can subtly justify excluding the "other." What was true in Jesus' day is still true today – with whom you eat matters. It was often at table, and in his descriptions of the great messianic banquet that Jesus demonstrated the nature of the kingdom as a space of welcome for all who would come (Luke 14:1–24). The dinner table can become a beautiful, disruptive (in a good way) mirror of Jesus' upside-down kingdom where "outsiders" and "enemies" are loved and welcomed.

This mundane but intimate space becomes a visible sign of the inbreaking of God's kingdom, but it requires us to take the table seriously and be intentional about how we curate it.

Our hospitality can subvert expectations, challenge assumptions, welcome outsiders or be an invitation to dialogue, and it

is also a space to be at our most human and vulnerable as we embody the reality that we need something outside ourselves to survive. Hospitality (*xenophilia* – love of the stranger or foreigner), is counter-politics that rejects fear of the unknown other or hatred of one's "enemies." While the dinner table is rife with the interplay of culture, class, taste and a smorgasbord of ethical concerns, making it a minefield, it also makes it ripe for some kingdom disruption of the sort Jesus exemplified.

Dambudzo Mushambi, resident in South Africa, is a PhD candidate at the University of Pretoria's department of Systematic Theology and Ethics and is an Associate Fellow of the KLC.

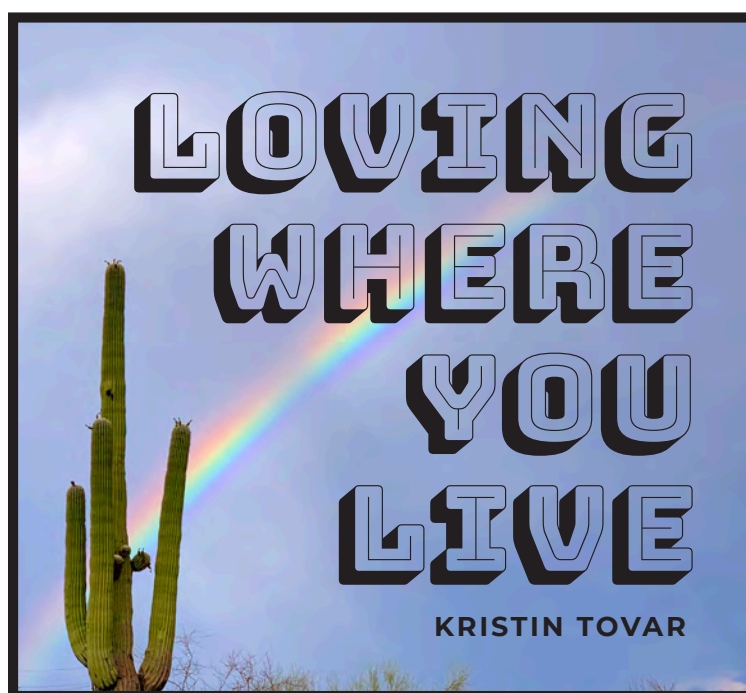
Growing up, we moved around a lot. We remained in the same region, but due to life circumstances we lived in many different houses and apartments: over eighteen by the time I left home at that same age. As a child, I had little control over those circumstances, but somehow I realized I had control over my perspective, even at a young age.

When we got to a new place, I would look for all the positives. One house had stairs; another had a park within walking distance. One house had a giant walk-in closet that doubled as a fun hideaway; another had a pool. One place was just down the street from my grandparents, and another had green spaces and a beautiful path to walk to get to the mailbox. One house was close to my school and friends; another had sidewalks great for biking and roller-skating. I never knew how long we would be in one place, so I held onto the good of each one. I did my best to soak up everything that made each place unique. Partially it was in my nature, and partially it was how I coped amidst the continual change.

My childhood experiences created tyre tracks in my mind that have endured into adulthood. I first noticed this when I travelled. Even inside hotel rooms or places I would stay, my mind veered back into those familiar grooves of making the most of what each location had to offer. From small things like the scents of the



pockets of neighbourhoods in close proximity. Each had its own texture and flavour reflecting its residents, history, architecture, businesses, and food and smells that flowed into the streets. My friend and I now laugh because I kept going around and saying, “I love this neighbourhood!” and then ten minutes later saying, “No, but I really love this neighbourhood,” on and on, as we made our way through each different part of the city.



It has been ten years since I started the “Why I Love Where I Live” Instagram account as a personal experiment. I took

photos of things I found interesting, beautiful, or that simply caught my attention. Each photo became part of a collection that over time, gave me new perspectives. Seeds were planted in the soil of my life long before there was anything to show above ground. When I first came to Tucson for college, I truly felt at home. Over time things changed, and as I saw more of the world, I began to see what was lacking rather than what was already there. My childlike heart of wonder became atrophied when it wasn’t used regularly, as it had

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lotion in the bathroom to bigger things like the view from the room, I was aware that each place I stayed in had a particular set of features. Their different combinations created an experience that had something to offer me, like a gift waiting to be discovered and opened by someone to enjoy at that moment. This awareness led to one of two things: gratitude or curiosity.



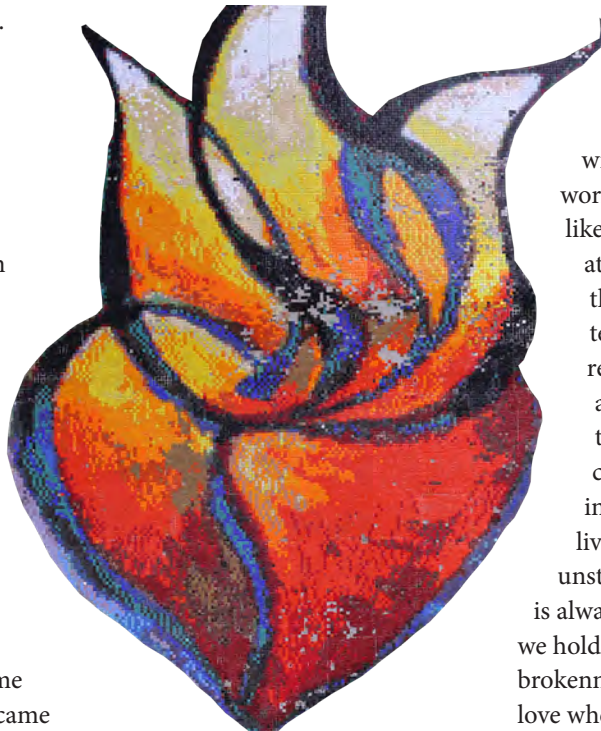


been in earlier parts of my life. The decisive moment came when I realized this. It was just weeks after I married a native Tucsonan when things started to settle in that not only had I committed to him, but in consequence, I had also (half-heartedly) committed to a place. In my opinion, that's no way to live! My next step was to find a way to grow that muscle again.

Before I started taking pictures and sharing them as a record of my journey, there was tension in me that I wanted to settle or eliminate altogether. When I realized my location would not change, I knew what remained that I could control – my perspective. I had to find that heart of gratitude and spirit of curiosity inside myself once again to settle the tension. In reality, the very surrender to my circumstances would leave me forever changed. Staying put became an unexpected blessing that has been one of the most formative and shaping things in my entire life. Commitment changes us. When we know certain external circumstances in a part of life are fixed, it allows us to surrender to what is. It opens things up to a new kind of freedom that initially feels the opposite of what we would consider “freedom.” The gift is that I can always choose a life-giving perspective no matter where I am and where I go. There is always beauty to celebrate. There is a gift in each moment waiting to be

unwrapped and enjoyed by whoever will choose to pause and delight in it.

When I started the account, I was hoping to just barely move the needle on my discontent. As much as I believed in the magic of gratitude and changing perspective, I was simply trying to figure out how to find even small sparks of joy amidst the mountain of disappointment I continued to wake up to each day. Even having those thoughts is a kind of luxury most people in the world do not have.



At the stage of the life I was in, and among my peer group, however, it was not uncommon to move far from home, leaving family and friends in order to pursue job opportunities and a greater sense of satisfaction elsewhere. I cannot offer a blanket statement about what one should or should not do in terms of what opportunities to take or not take in a highly mobile culture, but I will say: I believe I can be happy in any place because I have the tools and framework to find beauty

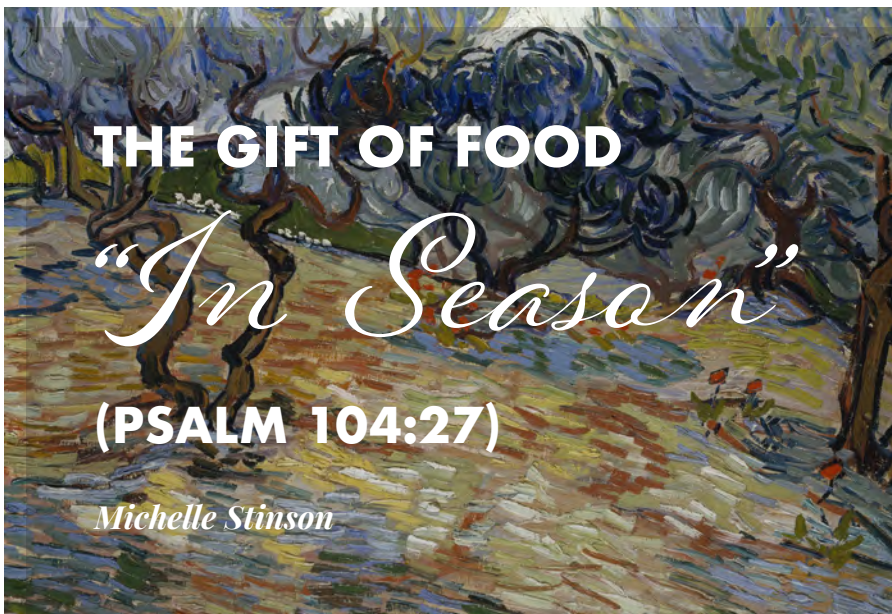
anywhere and everywhere.

There is a reason why the phrase, “The grass is greener where you water it” resonates with so many people. The more we love a place, the more we invest in it, and therefore the greater our affection becomes, creating a life-giving cycle of benefit to ourselves and the world around us. Living this way has connected me to a community of like-minded people and has become my primary vocation. The discontent I once felt transformed into something bigger than my own personal story because it matters that we invest in our relationship with place.

We have a relationship with the places where we live, work, play and inhabit, just like our other relationships at work, at home and in the public arena. When we tend to and cultivate that relationship with place, we are better equipped to handle the disappointments and challenges that will come in any place we invest our lives. As much as beauty is an unstoppable force, brokenness is always visible too. It's the beauty we hold onto that helps us face the brokenness and truly commit to love where we live.

Kristin Tovar is the founder of the movement (and shop) Why I Love Where I Live. For more information visit www.whyilovewhereilive.com or Instagram: @whyilovewhereilive. Photographs by the author.





Vincent van Gogh, *Olive Trees*

Enjoying the gift of food in season or “in its time” (בעתו) is an idea that has roots in the Hebrew Bible, being present in the garden narrative (Gen 2–3), an undercurrent in the wilderness wanderings (Exodus – Numbers), and something celebrated in the psalms. Psalm 104, a hymn of praise to YHWH, the creator and sustainer of the world, offers a helpful context for considering this theme. For here, the psalmist both celebrates God’s abundant provision while also extolling the wisdom of limits in God’s good creation.

As springtime arrives in the Rocky Mountains and winter wages its tug-of-war with the encroaching summer warmth, gardeners and urban farmers in the Denver area ramp up their hope-filled preparations for what will be the hopelessly short growing season ahead. As a new arrival to this ecosystem – zone 5b on the “USDA Plant Hardiness Zones” map – I continue to marvel at how our mile-high elevation still blesses this would-be gardener with the gift of a window of time, however short, to bask in the glories of growing her own food.

Each year, I make a commitment to myself to refrain from buying tomatoes and peaches during the “off season.” By “off season,” I mean the months between when the first ripe tomatoes appear in my garden – early August here in Colorado – and when the last unripe green tomatoes are plucked from the vines before our first frost, some years as early as late September. For peaches, I have to rely on my farmer friends with orchards outside Palisade, Colorado, who bring their bounty to a farmers’ market close to my home. And yet it is a long wait until July for the delight of a PF#1 or an Early Red Haven, the first Colorado peach varieties to come to fruition.



Paul Gauguin, *Still Life with Peaches*

Psalm 104, in keeping with the form of a hymn, is bookended by calls to praise (vv. 1a, 35b). The body of the psalm divides into five stanzas:

- God and the heavens (vv. 1b–4)
- God and the waters (vv. 5–10)
- God and the order of creation (vv. 11–23)
- God and the diversity of creation (vv. 24–30)
- God’s glory and the singer’s song (vv. 30–35a)¹

The psalmist spends much of the song extolling the works of God, namely, God’s creation of and providential care for the created world and its inhabitants. Surprising to some readers, human beings don’t enter the psalm until v. 14, almost halfway through the composition. As scholar James Mays notes (in *Psalms*, IBS [Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1994], 334): “It is remarkable with what unqualified directness the human species is considered as simply one of the creatures dependent on the providing of God.” While humans may seem to appear “late to the party” of this psalm, they still – as we shall see – have a seat at the table.

In Psalm 104, abundance and limitations are held in a beautiful balance. In this hymn that celebrates the abundance of God’s provision for – and through – the natural world, the psalmist also describes and celebrates the specific limits and boundaries embedded within the created order: namely, “an appointed place”/ “boundary”



Pekka Halonen, *Tomatoes*

1. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 770.

(מקום/גבול) set for the waters (vv. 8–9), the “appointed places/times” (מועדים) set for the moon and the sun (v. 19), and God’s provision of food “in its time” (בעתו) for God’s creatures (v. 27).

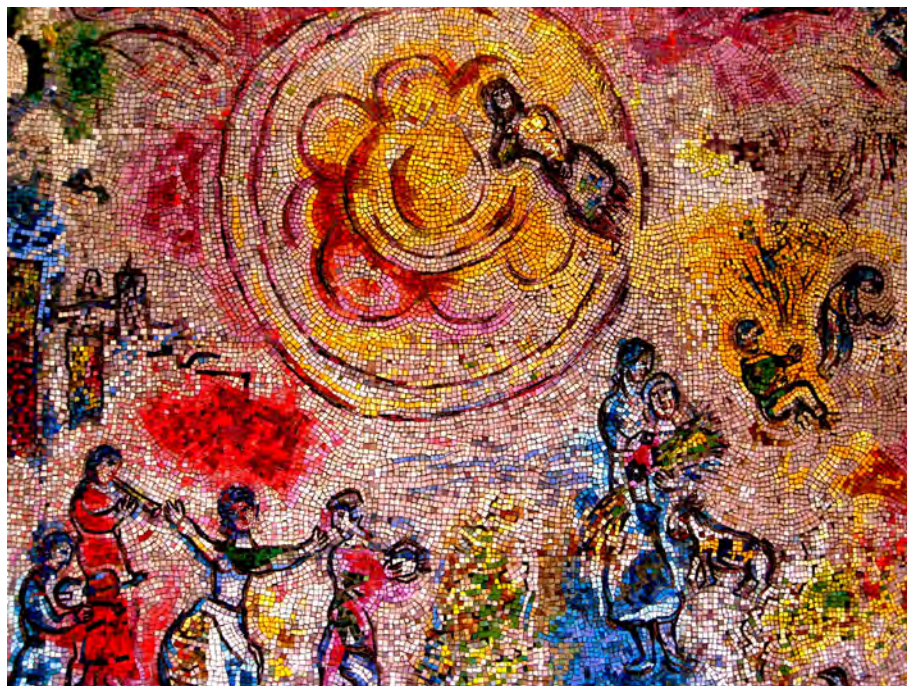
In the centre section of the hymn, the psalmist praises God’s work in providing food appropriate to various creatures. God causes grass to grow for the livestock (v. 14a) and various plants for humans to cultivate and transform into food (v. 14b). The psalmist pauses to delight at the possibilities humans are invited to enjoy: “wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart” (v. 15).² It is not surprising to hear of these three food products – wine, oil, bread – within this psalm since they are derived from what scholars refer to as the “Mediterranean triad” (grapes, olives, grains), the three agricultural crops that grew most easily in the semi-arid landscapes of ancient Israel.

The theme of food is picked up again near the end of the song as the psalmist now considers God’s food provisions for all God’s creatures – the land creatures and the sea creatures and God’s human creatures – all who benefit from the largesse of God’s generous hand: “These all look to you to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; you open your hand, they are filled with good things” (vv. 27–28). Here the phrase translated “in due season” is literally, “in its time” (בעתו; cf. Ps 145:15).

This phrase, occurring fifteen times in the OT, refers to “a time set by nature (i.e., for rain or fruit) or the right moment for something,” be this the rains, harvest, fruit, food, day and night, constellations, God’s intervention, or a word.³

2. All biblical quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

3. T. Kronholm, “עֵת” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Volume XI, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 440.



Marc Chagall, *Four Seasons Mosaic* (detail)

As the psalmist contemplates the generosity of God, there is also an acknowledgement of the natural limits imposed by seasonality in God’s provision in and through the natural world.

Reflecting on my lived reality of hoping and waiting – and at times not so patiently waiting – for my first taste of summer tomatoes and peaches, it is easy to be tempted in late February by the allure of the beautifully sun-streaked peaches on display in the produce section of my local grocery. And yet I know that one bite will reveal the true nature of that fruit. It was pulled from a tree in the southern hemisphere and allowed to “ripen” in a cargo container, then transported across the waters in order to appear as an impossible-possibility in the midst of winter’s stranglehold on the landscape. Like the fruit in the primordial Garden, one taste makes everything clear. And yet, as Psalm 104 reminds us, fruit – enjoyed in season – holds within itself the goodness that it, and we, were created for.



Vincent van Gogh, *Flowering Peach Tree*

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The cup of Communion wine is not just a sip of grape juice; it is at least a symbol of Christ's blood and in any thoughtful theology, far more than that. Drinking alcohol is always part of a wider context: a context that can be positive or negative. Understanding what that wider context is provides perspective on why at some times and in some places the church has not seen alcohol as a significant problem whilst elsewhere not drinking alcohol has been made a confessional issue.

The mediaeval monks of Europe became famous for their ability to brew beer, and both Martin Luther and John Calvin drank alcohol on a daily basis. On the other hand, American Christians are often ferociously teetotal. Why?

In the Middle Ages, the only water to drink was either rain water or river water, and the river was probably being used as the local public toilets, laundry and waste tip as well as providing the drinking water supply. There were only two ways to make the water safe from disease, to boil it or to brew it. As tea was not yet widely imported into Europe, fermenting barley or wheat in water was a simple way of making the water safe to drink and nutritious. In the Middle Ages, drinking alcohol was a health-protection measure. Children were given "small beer" (low in strength)

from an early age, and sick monks had their daily ration of beer doubled.

The American experience is born out of a very different background. As the pioneers expanded into the West, they were followed by shanty-towns, in which the

local tavern was also the brothel and the bookmaker's. To buy a drink in one of those places was to risk getting involved in the evils of prostitution and gambling. Small wonder then that it was something which no Christian could be seen to get involved in.

Drinking alcohol is not an activity which can be understood in abstraction. It is always contextual. Drunk Christians are an impediment to the credibility of the gospel with Muslims who see not drinking alcohol as an article of their faith (though Muslim practice with regard to alcohol has not been uniform

either). By contrast, for a Christian to refuse a nip of home-brewed raki from a Balkan or Turkic host or a glass of wine from a French or South African vintner is to insult one's host.

Drinking alcohol is also contextual

in the Bible. The wedding of Cana highlights how alcohol includes and excludes. At the wedding at Cana, not having enough wine to serve meant social disgrace. Jesus' miraculous intervention ensured that the wedding would be



Fernando Gallego workshop, *Changing the Water into Wine*

It's Never "Just a Drink"

DAVID McILROY

remembered for years afterwards as the one where the best wine was served. The sheer amount of alcohol Jesus produced was prodigious: the equivalent of 760 bottles of wine or 4,560 glasses of wine. Even allowing for the wedding lasting for up to a week, there was a lot of wine to go round.

Elsewhere in the Bible, not drinking alcohol is a sign of commitment to God. The Rechabites were a clan grouping within Israel which did not drink wine (Jer 35:6) and whose example of commitment was used by God to shame the rest of the people of Judah for their unfaithfulness (Jer 35:12–16). Numbers chapter 6 prescribes a rule of life for Nazirites, for men and women who want to make a special vow of dedication to the Lord. Not drinking wine or any other fermented drink was one of the obligations during the period of the vow (Num 6:3). Samson was a Nazirite (Judg 3:5), albeit one who was not faithful to all the aspects of his vow. John the Baptist was also probably a Nazirite, and certainly did not drink wine or other fermented drink (Luke 1:14–15).

How do we balance the teaching of Scripture? The book of Proverbs in the Old Testament warns us: “Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Prov 20:21). The drunkenness of Noah (Gen 9) and of Lot (Gen 19) was a source of shame. The bread and wine served by Melchizedek to Abraham was a symbol of blessing and a pre-figuring of the Eucharist (Gen 14:18). Proverbs 31 suggests that rulers should stay away from alcohol, leaving it to be a consolation to those whose lives are poor or bitter. In the New Testament, Paul says to the Ephesians: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery, but instead be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph 5:18, a verse which may explain the Scots’ love for whisky!) On the other hand, Paul’s advice to Timothy was “Stop drinking only water and take a little wine for your stomach’s sake” (1 Tim 5:23).

The contrast between the attitude of Jesus and John the Baptist to drinking was a cause of scandal in their own day. John the Baptist was accused of being demon-possessed because of his asceticism, while Jesus was slandered as a glutton and a drunkard (Matt 11:18). Jesus dismissed these criticisms, saying “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (in other translations, “wisdom is vindicated by her children”). What Jesus seems to be saying gnominically is that different followers of God may have different callings. John the Baptist’s abstemiousness was a signal of the holiness of God; Jesus’s willingness to eat and drink with tax collectors

and prostitutes a witness to the all-inclusive nature of God’s love.

It seems to be that there is nothing wrong with drinking alcohol as such; but it is wrong to drink too much or to drink it for the sake of getting drunk. A little alcohol can help friends relax in each other’s company. C. S. Lewis listed two friends talking over a pint of beer as one of the three most innocent pleasures in the world, along with a household laughing together over a meal and a man reading a book that interests him. Too much alcohol leads to drink-driving, bar brawls, sexual violence, and lives damaged permanently. It would be almost unthinkable for a French church to celebrate communion using anything other than a good claret, but I attended a church in Paris which had switched to non-alcoholic grape juice so that a recovering alcoholic could drink from the same cup as everyone else.

One of the wisest comments on this subject came from Augustine of Hippo, who counselled “total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation.” The answer is: know your limit. Jesus drank wine (Luke 22:17) and yet he was without sin. But if you cannot have a glass without losing control of yourself, then you should not drink (1 Tim 3:8). If your drinking would offend others or lead them into temptation, then you should refrain (Rom 14:21). If drinking is a distraction from the service of God, then you should give it up (Titus 1:7; 2:3). But if there are contexts in which you choose to drink, do so in praise of the God who gave the joys of conviviality, complex tastes, and refreshment.

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Johann Wilhelm Preyer, *Still Life*



Giovanni Stradano, *Last Supper* (detail, cropped)

Feasting in the Kingdom

GREGORY SODERBERG

In one sense, the Bible is all about food and eating. This theme runs throughout Scripture, from the fatal bite in the Garden of Eden to the tree of life in the garden/city of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21–22). Meals play a prominent role in the history of salvation, including meals that mark the institution of covenants, sacrificial meals eaten in the presence of God in the tabernacle and temple, the Passover, and Jesus’ meals with sinners. When giving his disciples a commemorative ceremony that encapsulates the meaning of salvation, Jesus gave us a meal – the Lord’s Supper, Eucharist or Communion.

Some have criticized the Protestant tradition of forgetting the central nature of this meal. In writing my dissertation on Communion frequency in the Reformed tradition, I found that most branches of the Christian church have struggled to make the Eucharist a meal that everyone is regularly invited to, and participates in. Even in the Roman Catholic or Orthodox traditions, where the Eucharist is a central feature of

worship, people have hesitated to attend this meal for various reasons.

In the wake of the liturgical renewal movements of the last century or so, the Lord’s Supper has been observed more frequently, and much valuable work has been done to try to reach an ecumenical consensus about the meaning and practice of Communion. What is sometimes overlooked is that this theologically charged ritual is a *meal* – involving food. Theologians have formerly argued strenuously about the metaphysics of this sacrament, while ignoring the fact that it is a *meal*. Theologians in recent decades have studied the sociological and eschatological aspects to the Eucharist as a meal as well. As a ritual meal, the Eucharist both defines and creates community; builds on the pervasive OT theme of God eating with his people; is partially fulfilled in Christ; looks forward to the wedding supper of the Lamb and shows us how the world will be in the consummation of all things. Enacting the eschatological feast here on earth, we eat and drink with Jesus, which

helps to bring about what we were taught to pray: “Your will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven.”

According to Peter Leithart, this eschatological feasting aspect of the Eucharist shows us the “way things really ought to be.”¹ When we participate in the Eucharist, we are, in some way, enacting the kingdom. It is a foretaste of the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6–9) and a partial fulfilment of the meals in the Old Covenant when the people “ate with God.” Abraham ate with the Lord (Gen 18). The elders of Israel ate in God’s presence on Sinai (Ex 24) as did the people of Israel in certain sacrifices in the tabernacle and the temple (Lev 7:11–38). Isaiah prophesies that all people will come and feast on God’s holy mountain:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of

1. Peter J. Leithart, “The Way Things Really Ought To Be: Eucharist, Eschatology, and Culture,” in *Blessed are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord’s Supper* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2000), 157–186. Originally published in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, 59 (1997).

well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of
aged wine well refined. (25:6)

This connection between food and faith, sociology and eschatology goes back to the ancient church. The *Didache*, one of the earliest post-biblical Christian writings, puts it beautifully in its model prayer for the Eucharist: “Just as the bread broken was first scattered on the hills, then was gathered and became one, so let your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory and power through all ages.” The Eucharist unites people from various races, ethnicities, genders and cultural identities into the one loaf of the church. This theological reality lies behind Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:17–34). They were preserving the socioeconomic distinctions of their culture when practising the Lord’s Supper. Rich and poor were separated, the poor went hungry and the rich indulged themselves. Practising the Eucharist rightly should drive us to transcend economic and cultural divides as we pursue the tangible unity of the body of Christ.

The Eucharist should also help to retrain and refocus our economic life. As we eat and drink together in the church, this fellowship, this *communion*, should spill out into the rest of the world. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for sharing their resources unjustly at the Lord’s table. Meditating on the Saviour who became poor for our sakes (2 Cor 8:8–14), who gave up privilege and

power (Phil 2), should motivate us to seek economic justice and true *shalom* in our communities.

There are also ecological aspects of the Lord’s Supper. It reminds us of a number of things: the good God who works throughout creation, causing the rain to fall and the wheat to grow. We should be thankful for the creativity of a God who designed the processes of fermentation to produce exquisite wine out of ordinary grape juice. We should thank God for the hands and the labour that produced what we consume in the Eucharist. In a world plagued by agricultural



Bread and Wine, St Michael the Archangel, Findlay, Ohio

disasters and over-consumption, the Eucharist can be a time of teaching, reflection and prayer for our local and global communities; of meditation on our own complicity in destructive systems of industrial agriculture. We should pray for God to reveal the extent of our economic idolatry and to tame our desires for consumption, teaching us grateful contentment. To teach, pray and meditate thus should not detract from the Christological focus of the Eucharist. Rather, it is an application of Paul’s teaching that God is

reconciling all things in heaven and earth through Christ (Col 1:20). The Eucharist reminds us that God does not devalue the physical world. Matter *matters* to God. He created it. He is redeeming it all through Christ. As we take the elements of the physical world, develop and reshape them into bread and wine, and consume them in the Eucharist, we are living out God’s call to take dominion over the earth and enjoy it under the blessing of God.

So, when we partake of this sacrament, all of this (and more) is in the background. The Eucharist helps us remember the death and resurrection of Christ, but it also helps to extend his work through his body, the church. Rituals form and shape us – spiritually, psychologically, and even physically. The redemption accomplished by Christ has cosmic implications. It is somewhat trendy to say that Christ is the Lord of all of life. Celebrating the Eucharist frequently can help us to keep this from being

simply an abstract theological formulation or slogan, and help us acknowledge the lordship of Christ over food, and over all the material world. It can help to mould us into a people that live Eucharist-shaped lives, being broken and sacrificed for others, even as we follow in the footsteps of our crucified King, the bread of life.

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IN THE STUDIO WITH MARY ABMA

Jorella Andrews interviews Mary Abma



Between the Tides. Inter-tidal life photographed through hand-blown laboratory glass.

Jorella Andrews: *As an artist focused on the natural environment you've said that you consider the whole world to be your studio. This orientation developed from a focus on your own back yard and has led to diverse projects in wild, remote and often also ecologically fragile regions. Could we start by talking about the studio in your yard?*

Mary Abma: I first moved my studio outdoors in 2009, while working on an exhibition called "In My Own Back Yard." I had heard about biodiversity loss and wondered how my own lack of attention might impact the environment around me. So, I turned to an artistic and scientific investigation of my suburban lot in Bright's Grove, Ontario. When we first moved in, the yard was only lawn. We had one tree, a shagbark hickory, which is native to our area.

When I started the project, I knew nothing about botany. First, I had to find out what was growing in my yard, and to discover the stories, the histories, behind this growth. I left my lawn alone for a whole growing season so that every plant that was there could spring up of its own accord. I made an artistic herbarium of the eighty-two different species of plants I had collected, none of which I had planted. What I learned from making this piece was that most of my plants shouldn't have been in my yard!

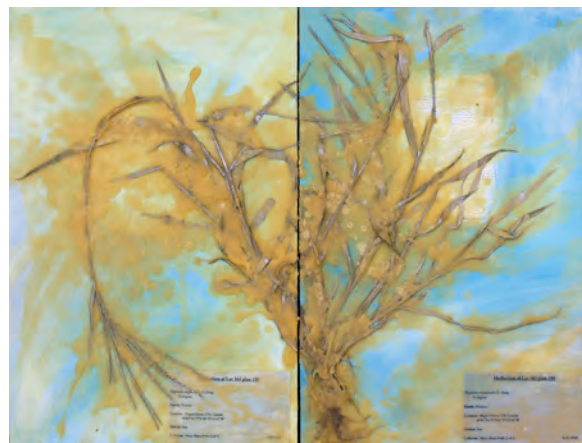
JA: *Did you learn why these plants ended up there in the first place?*

MA: Most of them were imported – they came over with European settlers – often because they had known medicinal qualities or were edible. Or because they simply reminded people of home or had symbolic significance. The settlers did not know that plants that were important markers of place for them would become invasive colonizers of North American ecosystems. It is true, however, that colonialist nations would deliberately plant their seeds around the world as a kind of statement of domination. Conversely, they would also import plants and seeds from their colonies, especially for potential financial gain. Ecosystems are complex and so are the stories around their disruption and homogenization.

JA: *I understand that the herbarium piece and other works in your exhibition led to a follow-up project – a rewilding of your back yard.*

MA: One of the things that struck me while working on "In My Own Back Yard" was that even though I never used chemicals, my yard was clearly unhealthy. The shagbark hickory had died and the lawn was full of non-native plant species. In the fall of 2019, I hired an expert who rewilded my yard with plants that belong there: for example, purple coneflower, different species of milkweed and goldenrod, and ferns and asters that are all native to this area. In effect, we now have a nature preserve in our back yard. It has become a really important space of inspiration for me, and I spend a lot of time there.

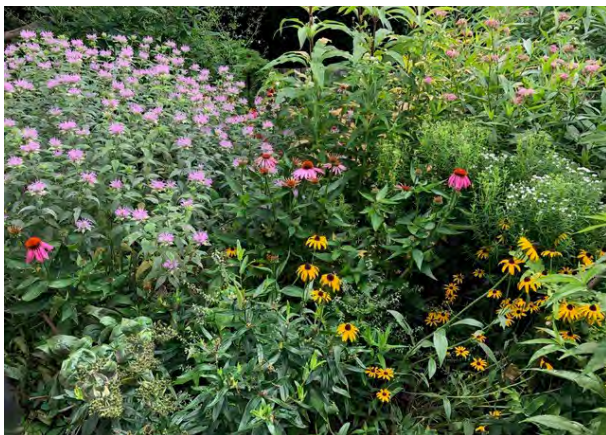
Herbarium of Lot 161 Plan 150 installation, 2011, with detail (right). (122 masonite panels, acrylic, transfer print, plant specimens, beeswax)



JA: *Many different creatures must have been drawn to this place since the rewilding. How are you tracking or cataloguing these changes?*

MA: Mainly, I started taking macro photos of the insects in my back yard, and I quickly became very fond of them. It's like going into another world and the work I do there has almost become ritualistic: a ritual practice of paying attention that I engage with. I write poetry that informs my art and share my photography on social media as a way to invite people into the experience. I want everyone to learn to love these beings as much as I do. Google most insects and your top hits will be extermination companies, which just reinforces the idea that we should be afraid of them. And now we have problems with our pollinators disappearing – some people call it the insect apocalypse. We need insects. They are a critical part of our ecosystems.

JA: *A recent William Kentridge exhibition at the Royal*



Mary's back yard

Academy in London included his film installation Notes Towards a Model Opera (2015). Among other insights, it emphasized the environmental significance of each creature, however negatively we might at first view them. He referenced Chairman Mao's The Four Pests campaign which aimed at eliminating rats, flies, mosquitoes and sparrows. The sparrow cull caused locusts to proliferate and destroy harvests, contributing to the ensuing famine that cost at least thirty million Chinese people their lives. Considering the ecosystem from the perspective of food and feeding, and our ongoing struggles to create environments that best fulfil the needs of all, begs the question: What have you learned from your intimate observations of insect behaviour, and insect-plant symbiosis?

MA: I approach my yard, not as a scientist, but as an

observer and I've noticed a lot of things. One is that because our rewilded yard was designed to be a balanced ecosystem, we don't get infestations. Japanese beetles, for instance, are everywhere in Southwestern Ontario and they skeletonize whole yards. Our yard gets some, but never in numbers large enough to do damage. I also watch creatures like caterpillars. In one small area of our garden, we have some herbs and vegetables, including parsley. This year I documented the eastern swallowtail caterpillars going through their different phases of development. They would choose one parsley plant and mow it down, but, remarkably, they always left enough so that it didn't die and always came back. I watched our tomatoes because people complain about how bugs get at them but I have observed that in a healthy garden, insects will decimate one tomato in a clump and leave the others.

JA: *So we might say that you have grown a studio which you both tend and attend to with tremendous energy –*



Development of black eastern swallowtail butterfly

and of course, etymologically, studio comes from the Latin studere which links practices of studying to expressions of zeal.

MA: It's a studio, a laboratory, a church in a sense – a place of reverence and connection.

JA: *And a place of wisdom because it's revealing these patterns that we really need to pay attention to. There are besetting problems in our world connected with resources and the problem of who has what and who takes too much – getting the balance wrong. The problems of addiction and overconsumption – not knowing when to stop; not having the capacity to let things be.*

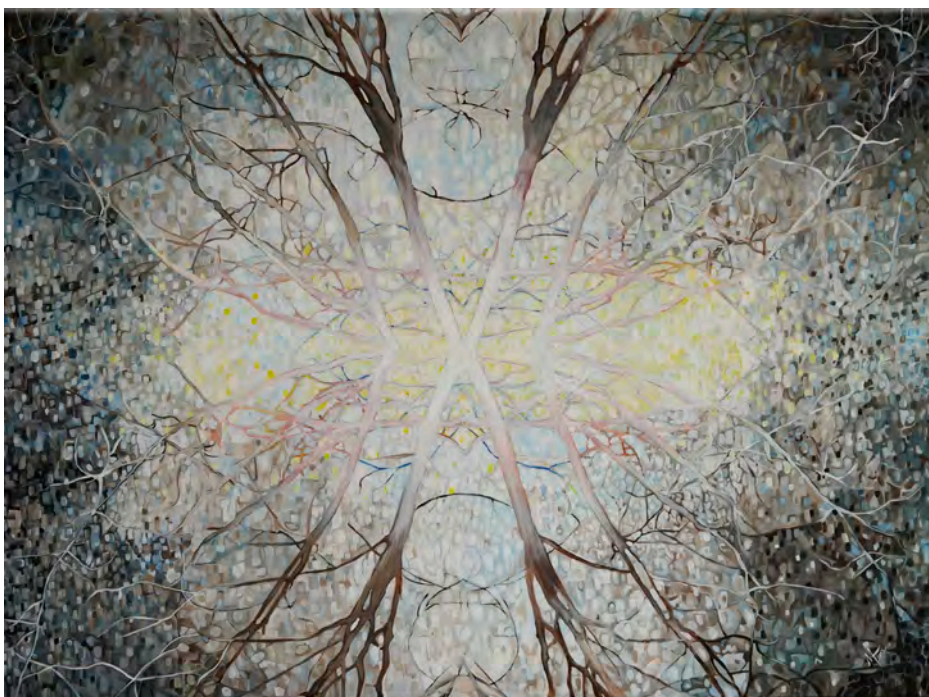
MA: And leaving some for others. We need to get away from the idea that we have to take as much as

we possibly can. I wish that everybody who owned a business would watch eastern swallowtail caterpillars develop on a parsley plant.

JA: As you have photographed your yard and its creatures, you have entered into a quite different, non-competitive, non-hierarchical economy, one in which transformations in how we perceive and learn have a profound cognitive, emotional and behavioural impact. In her book, World Spectators (Stanford University Press, 2000), Kaja Silverman reflected on how non-verbalising creatures and things communicate and how we all can be reshaped as we attend to these communications. As a phenomenologist, this interests me profoundly. I like to think of these encounters as occurring in what I call the

garden studio led to a loss of fear about aspects of the natural world you originally regarded as horrific and ugly. Through your photographic work, you're starting to inhabit this strange and unfamiliar world; it is welcoming you and seems to be recognizing and acknowledging you.

MA: That's exactly how it feels. I now talk to plants and to insects a lot. I write poetry about them. I tell them they are beautiful and am no longer afraid of them. I was looking closely at bald-faced hornets and noticing how beautiful they are. Google has pages of warnings that they are dangerous, but they're dangerous when their habitat is being invaded – when they're not respected. There has to be reciprocal respect: I haven't been stung yet.



Nerve Centre. (Acrylic on canvas. Part of Mary's Ash Tree Cathedral Ruins series)

self-showing world: a world in which dualistic models have been progressively dismantled. I believe that close looking – including technologically-assisted close looking – can break down enmity. When we experience ourselves as self-showing entities in a self-showing world, something extraordinary happens: a dismantling of forced boundaries between the human and the natural world which was created to be loving and to be loved by us.

MA: Some ecologists now use the word, love, which is at the core of all this. And there is a connection between love and place and the sacred.

JA: *You have said that perceptual immersion in your*

BEAUTY AND THE SACRED

JA: *For you, the “ugly,” “frightening” or “dangerous” seems to have become beautiful. It interests me that in the 21st century there's been a resurgence of interest and respect for this notion of beauty that was so denigrated during the 20th century. Now theorists (Lars Spuybroek, Joke Brouwer and others) talk about the idea of a vital beauty, not a stagnant notion of beauty where everything is perfectly symmetrical; but a kind of vitality and energy. This seems akin to what you are experiencing, not beauty as something static – perfected and composed – but a beauty of demeanour: the way things operate and relate when they are allowed to become intricately balanced and aware.*

MA: Yes! For example, I recently read that there is an electric component that attracts bees to particular flowers. Recognizing the relationship between beauty and vitality and energy is crucial.

JA: *How have these revelations affected your broader reflections on aesthetics, especially from the vantage point of faith? Your experiences of beauty here seem to function as deeply affective, and effective, gateways into realms we might want to describe as divine, realms that we might otherwise be closed to, or simply miss.*

MA: I've always been attracted to the thin places, liminal spaces. I hadn't thought of beauty as a gateway, but why not? I always feel that my yard is a liminal space. And I believe that one of the problems today is that we

no longer see the sacred in the natural world. If we saw a wild space as sacred, we would be far more thoughtful about how we interact with it. Would we be so quick to destroy something we consider to be sacred?

EUCHARIST: IN GRATITUDE

JA: *And, of course, beauty is a form of sustenance – and this recalls our earlier discussions. You grow literal foodstuffs in your studio/garden, but this place also feeds you spiritually.*

MA: Yes. For years, I have been interested in that deeper nourishment. I have used the Eucharist as a theme in a number of works because the whole ritual around the Eucharist is one of spiritual nourishment and gratitude. In 2013, I created *In Communion*, which shows a metaphorical connection between the eucharistic elements and symbols of community, hospitality and nourishment, represented by using beeswax and honeycomb. At that time, I had just begun to make the connection between the holy and the wild.

The kind of nourishment my yard gives me has opened up new pathways to human connection as well. There are many who seek a way forward as people of faith in a hurting world. I have become involved in the Wild Church movement and am looking back at my faith tradition with a new lens and a deeper understanding. I have begun to call my art practice *transdisciplinary* because, not only does it draw on different disciplines, it takes on forms that are traditionally assigned to different practices, that may not always look like art: a poem, a psalm, a scientific paper, a song, or a conversation. In my practice, separate disciplines drop away and process becomes more important.

JA: *Your work doesn't shy away from acknowledging pestilence and death. I'm interested to hear how those themes fit into your practice.*

MA: To think of the natural world as all sunshine and happiness is a shallow



In Communion. (Acrylic, beeswax, honeycomb and communion tray)

understanding of reality. So, I pay attention to the darkness out there – things like predation and again, it seems that it is never excessive. Death is part of the balance, as is darkness, and the underground. What goes on underground is phenomenal and generally ignored. Scientists are finding out more about communication networks through mycorrhizal fungus – we were unaware of this until recently, yet it is essential to how life is sustained. I think we need to reclaim the word “mystery” when it comes to our understanding of God and the created world – the more I think I know, the more I realize I don’t know – and we need to approach the complexity of the world with that kind of humility or we will continue to destroy.

JA: *Speaking of destruction, you did a series of works about the loss of native ash trees. Why was it important to approach this work by creating rituals of mourning for them?*

MA: Rituals are important and I feel that most of our lives lack rituals – especially around death and mourning. For this project, I postulated that if we properly mourn species that are lost due to human actions, we might take more care to prevent such losses in the future. So, I created mourning objects, wrote poetry, crafted symbolic “shrouds” for dead trees, and even held a memorial gathering for the community. This all circles back to gratitude. When we lack that eucharistic sense of gratitude and communion, we become disconnected from the natural world; we disrupt the balance.

Jorella Andrews is Professor of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. All artwork and photographs by Mary Abma (www.maryabma.com).



Roadside Fallen, Ash Tree Memorial Trail, 2017. (Phragmites stems and hemp rope on ash tree remains)

Artists “At Home” in Community

HEIDI SALZWEDEL

This article explores the most recent annual KRUX Artists’ Gathering and includes stories about how artists can experience a sense of place and home through sharing in communities of generative orthodoxy.

“The Artists’ Gathering: At Home” took place in late 2022 in the green and leafy winelands of the Cape, South Africa. The much-loved annual weekend conference is a time of teaching, networking and inspiration between artists of Christian faith. The Artists’ Gathering 2022 was held at East Mountain Retreat Centre, Stellenbosch, with the lounge and communal areas of the venue providing a sense of “home” which formed an apt backdrop for the theme for the gathering. The thematic synopsis for the weekend, as laid out by the team which curated the event, was that “as artists of Christian faith, we often occupy the margins of society, the church, and the art world. The margins are a necessary and fruitful space for creative practice but can leave us asking where we truly belong.” A question undergirded the event: Is there a place where we can experience being centred and

truly at home? The organising team further explained that “a home is the local place of belonging and sanctuary from which we move outwards and engage with the world around us. It’s where we can be most truly ourselves, and give full expression to the different sides of ourselves.” It is true that home is also where we experience being known by God and those around us.

On the first day of the Artists’ Gathering, attendees were welcomed with a keynote address, titled “A Theology of Home,” by Dr James Krohn, director of KRUX. He laid out a theological foundation for the weekend and cast his vision for a sense of redemptive placemaking as the calling of artists in their current global culture of displacement. He theoretically

encapsulated God’s plan of emplacement, displacement and re-emplacement. God’s initial emplacement of the created

in their earthly “home” as laid out in Genesis 2, is followed by the growing sense of perpetual displacement and rootlessness since the fall (Gen 3). With God as the architect, and Jesus as both the builder and the cornerstone, the call to be re-emplaced begins to play itself out as we progress through Scripture from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Krohn left attendees with food for thought as to how they were called to make redemptive art, not necessarily Christian art.

Professor Jorella Andrews of Goldsmiths, University of London,



Jonathan Griffiths, the event organiser, introducing Heidi Salzwedel's presentation

joined us virtually in the lounge via Zoom and shared with us about “Building Sites: On God’s call to return, and the book of Zechariah as a manual for contemporary artists.” She reintroduced images and words from the book of Zechariah and explained that it is a book which calls God’s people home after years of being in exile. She cast light on the words insisting that the homecoming must centre on rebuilding God’s house before focusing on rebuilding our own. Andrews believes that this book can also be approached as a manual bringing hopeful insight



James Krohn introducing “A Theology of Home”



Jarrod Howard-Browne facilitating the film viewing and discussion.

and courage to artists working in times of placelessness and spiritual devastation.

Jarrod Howard-Browne, the design editor of *The Big Picture* magazine and film enthusiast, presented on “Transcendental Style” and facilitated a film viewing and discussion. Howard-Browne opened our eyes to a slower mode of viewing. The film we watched in community, *First Reformed*, fostered a sense of leaning away so that the viewer can lean in. Transcendental style withholds from the viewer the usual action present in most films, so that the viewer has to slow down and rest, even to the point of boredom. It is a style which makes space for the transcendent to be seen by means of withholding information and that which one would ordinarily expect. Howard-Browne invited viewers into a slower sense of place and home, by introducing artists to a film that forces liminal spaces of in-betweenness and non-action.

Dr Stella Viljoen, an associate

professor in visual studies at Stellenbosch University, asked many questions in her talk titled “Is the male gaze still a thing? A feminist game of dress-up and what we can learn from it.” Viljoen revealed the art of two enormously successful photographers who each embody a specific era of feminist politics, Cindy Sherman from the seventies in America, and Zanele Muholi in contemporary South Africa. She opened our eyes to how, in her words, both artists “court and critique the camera.” Viljoen asks: “Do they really subvert the ‘feminine ideal’ or merely play-act at feminism?” Viljoen opened the discussion on the notion of desire and intimacy and how the camera both brings about a close-up intimacy through portraiture, yet also violates healthy God-given intimacy through the pervasiveness of social media selfies and pornography which makes its way into our homes via the compelling pull of screens.

Throughout the weekend there were presentations, and times of shared meals and networking together. Attendees were able to learn from one another, share their experiences and ideas and form connections that usually last long after the gathering is over. The aim of the gathering as hoped for by the organising team of 2022 was to explore how,

as artists, we can integrate our spiritual and creative practices, nurture meaningful relationships and contribute to the life of our local communities within a global world. By doing so we can discover how our calling to create from the margins gives us a significant role in our world today.

On the final day of the Artists’ Gathering, attendees came together around a table for a closing ceremony of sharing the Lord’s Supper, facilitated by James Krohn. The group reflected on what we had learned and experienced over the course of the weekend. We left the gathering feeling nourished with both spiritual and physical food, encouraged, and ready to continue on a path of redemptive placemaking.

Heidi Salzwedel, a graduate of Stellenbosch and Rhodes Universities, is an art and design educator, and an artist/writer who lives and works in Cape Town. She is a member of KRUX and one of the founders of the annual Artists’ Gathering conference. For more about KRUX visit www.krux.africa and learn about the history of the Artists’ Gathering [here](#). Unless otherwise indicated, photographs are by courtesy of Christan Barnard, a member of the KRUX community.

Creating lasting connections through conversation and shared meals





Theodor Philipsen, *A Cow*

“There is,” says the proverb, “a place for everything and everything in its place.” In 1675, John Hacket, Bishop of Lichfield, elaborated: “The Lord hath set everything in its place and order.” So, what place did God give food?

It depends upon the food. The culinary place for every seed-bearing plant and every fruit-bearing tree starts in Eden (Gen 1:29–30). For John Calvin, the vegan diet of Eden was “abundantly sufficient for the highest gratification,” “a liberal abundance which should leave nothing wanting to a sweet and pleasant life.” The promised land is the vegetarian place of abundance: grapes, pomegranates and figs (Num 13:23); the kingdom of God is the place for a bloodless feast – after all, the lamb is to lie down *with* the wolf, not *within* the wolf (Isa 11:6–9; 65:25).

The place of animals is not on a plate, but to praise and disclose their great creator, to sing out in praise and joy.¹ The church has sung out these truths most weeks for many centuries. From Thomas Ken’s (1674) “Doxology” (“Praise God from whom all blessings flow; *praise Him, all creatures here*

1. 1 Chron 16:32; Ps 96:11–13; 148:7–10; Rev 5:13.

A PLACE FOR PRAISE AND GRATIFICATION

PHILIP SAMPSON

below”), to Kari Jobe’s “Revelation Song” in which we join all creation in singing praise to the King of kings.

Our family had little of this in mind when we first began to move to a plant-based diet some fifty years ago. It was not because we were especially aware that the purpose

the biblical meaning of creation came later. Rather, it was because we had learned that our dietary choices were directly contributing to the malnutrition suffered by many in the developing world. For us, it made no sense to campaign for social justice while undermining our message with our

actions. Moreover, to us, a change of diet seemed a small effort for the improved nutrition of malnourished children. Only later did we find it hard to sing with integrity one of the many songs based on Psalm 148, from Thomas Ken to Kari Jobe, while knowing we would go home and eat the choir.



Edward Hicks, *Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch*

of creation is to praise and declare God;² nor for epicurean reasons of “the highest gratification,” as Calvin put it. Discovering the pleasures of a plant-based diet, and insight into

2. Westminster Confession 4.1; 5.1.

But look around you. The world is no longer an Eden, or even a promised land; and God gave animals to Noah to eat.

Our fallen world is without doubt a place of dietary scarcity, suffering and death. Since the flood, fleshpots have sometimes been necessary for survival in this sinful world.

It was, observed the Calvinist, Thomas Adams in 1629, “sin that made us butchers, and taught the master to eat the servant.” Yet, God is merciful to his animals, and constrains our cruelty. Noah was commanded to ensure the

animal was dead before butchery began (Gen 9:4), outlawing the practice of cooking an animal while yet alive. The Mosaic covenant declared “unclean” (inedible) those animals whose slaughter entails intense agonies: swine, crustaceans, cetaceans, cephalopods ... Even “clean” (edible) animals may not be slaughtered or eaten if they bear the scars of abuse or mutilation (Lev 11; etc.). By contrast, modern factory farming relies on mutilation and abounds in abuse. Solomon in all his wisdom, warned that animal cruelty is wickedness, incompatible with a righteous life (Prov 12:10). We also have New Testament witness. Jesus relies upon his heavenly Father’s known care for sparrows to demonstrate his care for us (Matt 10:29). His reputation for making “easy” yokes that do not chafe and cause pain, reassures us that discipleship is a place of care (Matt 11:28–30). Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). In view of this, it is unsurprising that many of our evangelical forebears took a dim view of cruelty. Westminster divine, George Walker (1641), calls it “a kind of scorn and contempt of the workmanship of God our creator.”

In today’s world, we don’t just eat the choir, we first hand over God’s creatures to an industry known for its cruelty. Calvin asked why God bothers to care about birds (Deut 22:6–7; Matt 10:29). He answers that he “meant to express the better, how greatly He abhors all cruelty.... Birds may seem of no value to us, but God will tolerate no cruelty to them.” Yet *we* tolerate it; indeed, we pay for it. In the modern meat industry, chickens are routinely scalded to death, cattle are skinned and dismembered alive.³

3. Joby Warrick, “Modern Meat: A Brutal Harvest, ‘They Die Piece by Piece,’” *The Washington Post*, 10 April 2001. Gail Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse* (Prometheus, 2007), 129–134, 197–201.

How the demons must rejoice at the sights of such butchery; how they must enjoy the cries of pain. An animal created to praise God has been reduced to screaming, quivering flesh; its agonies disclose nothing of the God of love; much about ourselves. From its violent, sinful origin (Gen 6:11–13; 9:3–4), to the cruel wickedness of industrial farms, the place of meat has always been bloody.

We live in a place where it is entirely possible to live healthily without supplementing our diet with flesh; indeed, research indicates that the low-cruelty diet of Eden is actually healthier – as one might expect of God’s plan for us.

In the wilderness places we reject God, and lust after fleshpots. God provides until we are gorged, until it comes out of our nostrils; and we bury those who lusted in their graves of desire.⁴ Carnist lust kills.

The British may be an island nation, but we are no island, entire of ourselves. The place we give meat has an unsustainable global impact. It industrialises hideous cruelties, is a major source of greenhouse gases, pollutes land and sea, contributes to malnutrition in developing countries, causes ill health, is associated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and generates new zoonotic diseases. Does God have a place for such ruinous food in Britain today?

Dr Philip J. Sampson, is a Fellow at The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics and Consultant Editor for the Journal of Animal Ethics.

4. Ex 16:2–3; Num 11:4, 18–20, 33–34; Ps 78:17–18, 27–31; 106:14–15.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY PHILIP SAMPSON:

- *Animal Ethics and the Nonconformist Conscience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
- “The Ethics of Eating in ‘Evangelical’ Discourse: 1600–1876,” in *Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Clair Linzey (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2018).
- “Evangelical Christianity: Lord of Creation or Animal among Animals? Dominion, Darwin, and Duty,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Animal Ethics*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Clair Linzey (Abingdon,

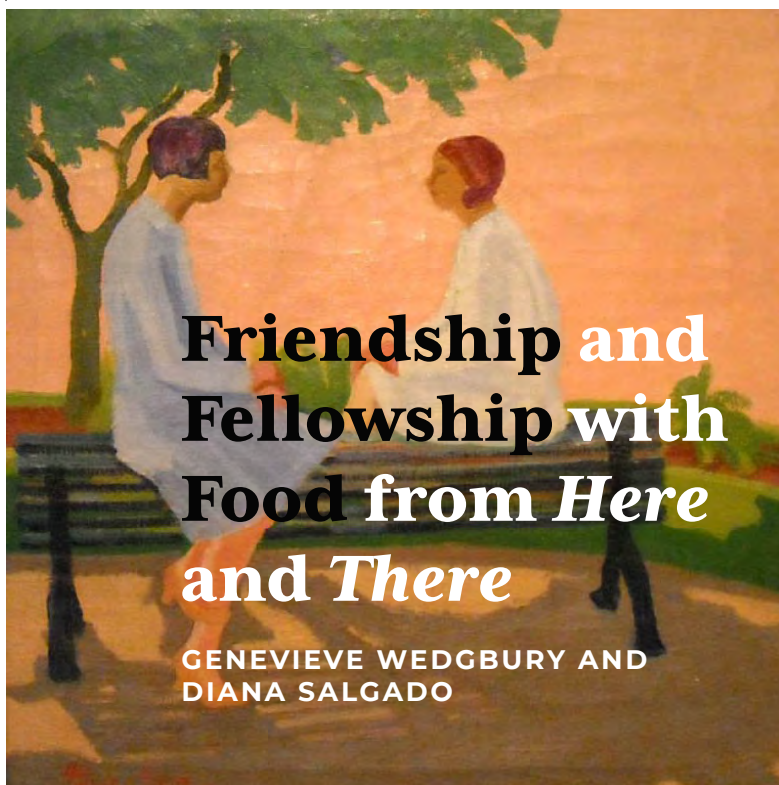


Doug Argue, *Untitled (Chicken Painting)*

- Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2018).
- “Noah, Jesus and Ecology – Sustaining and Restoring the Environment,” in *Climate Crisis and Sustainable Creaturely Care*, ed. Christina Nellist (Cambridge, UK: CSP, 2021), 137–151.

FURTHER READING:

- Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (London: SCM, 1996).
- Philip Lymbery, *Farmageddon* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014).
- See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WW56dKrqeQ> (Warning: explicit content).



Petrona Viera, *Friendship*

conversations, discussions and prayers, I can see that the Spirit has been most beautifully at work in our walking alongside one another as sisters in Christ.

Approaching this account from the hermeneutic of friendship and fellowship transforms the way we have approached the topic of food and place. It has come about through sharing stories of our own health issues and the ensuing pain and disruption they caused. As our Zoom calls came to an end, we would close in prayer. Those prayers revealed intrinsic beliefs we held that there was hope that things would get better and healing was possible.

In *Food and Faith* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), Norman Wirzba argues that the act of eating brings us both spiritually and physically into the sacrificial membership which is at the heart of God's creation, reflecting his self-offering character. But through our fallen, consumerist mindset, our ability to do this faithfully has been compromised. "Ecofeminism involves seeing and knowing the world differently" writes Grey. "It involves knowing ourselves as part of the web of life, in communion and interdependent with all living things. Not, as Descartes wrote, as thinking subject, observing the world as object" (*Sacred Longings*, 130). We are certainly facing a health crisis in the West with the rise of diet and lifestyle-related diseases. Dr Robert Lustig's book *Metaboficial* (Harper Wave, 2021) is provocative but to the point: "If *you* do not fix *your* food, you continue to court chronic disease and death. If *we* do not fix *our* food, we continue to court societal and planetary oblivion" (4, italics his). Food and place matter, as Diana discovered.

"Knowing the world is knowing ourselves as nature, as survivors with nature, thinking, feeling, celebrating and suffering together, deeply caught up in the longing for mutual flourishing, especially where this is most threatened."

– Mary Gray

Diana and I were introduced to one another as co-explorers in the world of food and health, though I felt vastly underqualified in this area (and still do and am!). Whereas Diana is a food engineer working on projects to reduce food waste in the UK, my interest in food and well-being developed gradually, and very much as a lay Christian and non-scientist! But I was keen to speak to other Christians who shared my passion and interest.

In reading some of Mary Grey's work in ecofeminist theology, what struck me is its holistic approach to understanding our place in the web of creation. It seems a natural leap to me to include our relationship with ourselves as part of that web, and more specifically, our relationship with our bodies. In issue 26.7 of the KLC's *Ethics in Conversation*, I wrote about "My Journey to Body Literacy," but as Grey is at pains to stress in her work, the ecofeminist spirit must also be a communal spirit, and what I have discovered most precious with Diana over the few years we have known each other is friendship and fellowship. As I reflect on our

Genevieve: *What is eating like in Mexico?*



Aksel Waldemar Johannessen, *Market Scene*

1. Mary Grey, *Sacred Longings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 133.

Diana: In Mexico City, where I am from, breakfast is *accomplished* during weekdays if you wake up very early. If not, you'll be eating breakfast bars, bread or biscuits and coffee. Breakfast during weekends could be a more peaceful experience. Breakfast in Mexico consists of eggs prepared in different ways, like eggs *à la mexicana* (tomato, onion and green chillies cut in small dices and mixed with scrambled eggs), eggs *rancheros* (fried eggs on fried corn tortillas with very spicy salsa), eggs *divorciados* (one fried egg covered in green salsa and the other fried egg covered in red salsa) and other funny flavoured eggs. Eggs come with refried beans, tortillas or bread, salsas, fruit, juice, coffee and sweet bread. Lunch, which is around 2 pm (who can be hungry before 2 pm with such a big breakfast!), consists of soup as starter, then meat (chicken, beef, etc.) prepared in stew or fried and served with vegetables and rice, tortillas, salsas and water flavoured with hibiscus flowers or any fruit or vegetable available, e.g., cucumber and lime water. Then, dessert is typically a fruit jelly or flan.

Our dinners tend to be very light – cereal, quesadillas or fruit. If you go out with friends, tacos are the most popular option. We snack a lot and most of our snacks are spicy.

GW: *What was eating like for you in Mexico?*

DS: It was a time to stop my activities and enjoy life. It was a time to catch up with friends during the day and every day. It was a time to think of something else that was not my job and to plan activities for the weekend (or other free time) with my friends and family.

GW: *What did you notice about food when you came to the UK?*

DS: Three main differences in descending order: 1) It was way too sweet – even the savoury foods; 2) the fruit and vegetable options were reduced or unaffordable; and 3) wheat products were everywhere. Also, lots of food products use food preservatives and herbicides that I was not used to and gave me stomach/intestinal aches, sometimes even for weeks.

GW: *So, your health started to suffer when you came to the UK?*

DS: Yes, in two ways. The first one was that I was not allowed to continue with my medication for insulin resistance. The second was that my intestines started to get damaged by the combination of the overexposure to wheat and food preservatives/herbicides and the underexposure to fresh and diverse food. I was feeling bloated and lethargic as never before.

GW: *What was the impact on your mental health and your relationship with God?*

DS: I started to be very frustrated and sad because things that I used to do were now very difficult or impossible because of my health issues. At the beginning, I was praying a lot alone and with friends. Then, I started to lose faith and feel alone. Over the years, I ended up with

a more mature faith in Jesus, knowing that he was leading my battle and that I had to fight it. Very often after praying I used to find the right people who helped me in many ways, physically and mentally (like you). Praying itself makes me feel stronger.

GW: *How did you make the link with food/lifestyle?*

DS: This was a tricky one because some of my symptoms, for example joint pain, appeared days after eating something that my body didn't like. My mum (from Mexico) was very helpful. She was keeping a food diary for me and concluded I should stop eating so much wheat. It was also clear to me that the lower sun exposure and the stress of the PhD weren't helping. In the UK I just wasn't the same as in Mexico.

GW: *What steps did you take to make improvements?*

DS: As my health started to decline considerably – and I was being diagnosed with illnesses I didn't have – I started a trial-and-error method which helped a lot. I tried cutting out foods and preservatives commonly



Theresa Kasun, *Cake Heaven*



Arshile Gorky, *Pears, Peaches and Pitcher*

associated with inflammation and intestinal damage. Surprisingly, my symptoms improved when I cut out certain foods that I was used to eating in Mexico. However, my symptoms did not fully disappear until I saw a nutritionist. She did some blood tests and recommended a low histamine diet and several supplements to fix my intestines, which really helped.

It took me nine years – and lots of money and consultants – to convince the GP that my health struggles were also because of the need of the medicine I had been taking since I was a young teenager when I was diagnosed with insulin resistance (like most of my family have been).

GW: *What have you learnt during this process?*

DS: To be more responsible for my own health. I used to leave that responsibility to “medical experts” but as everyone in their own field knows, you cannot know everything.

GW: *What advice would you give to someone in a similar position?*

DS: That if you don’t find health improvements with the treatments recommended by “experts,” don’t give up! Go and find somebody that will recommend different tests and treatments that suit you better. That could be the solution.

GW: *How has your faith informed your journey towards body literacy/eating in a way that supports your physical and mental well-being?*

DS: The Bible tells us that bad situations are not intended in God’s plans. Throughout the Bible we can

see how out of bad situations, something good flourishes. Most importantly, through Jesus we have power to overcome evil – in this case, a health issue. By having this faith/belief, who would think of giving up?

Mary Grey writes that, “In fact, Christianity is the one religion where all evil, ambiguity and violence are explicitly excluded from divine being” (*Sacred Longings*, 128). We can strive towards holistic health and well-being confident that our flourishing is part of God’s plan. She continues to explain how the action of Jesus was “directed to physical sustainability of earth and people” and that his healing ministry was “central” to his mission: “Jesus wants people healed in mind and body. Bodies need to be nourished, fed and healed” (137).

And yet, Christianity presents us with the suffering God of the universe who enters into the heart of the reality of broken bodies and broken minds. We need not feel any shame at our need for healing and restoration, but rather respond to the gentle but urgent calling forth of Christ into all that he has for us.

God makes himself vulnerable, as Grey asserts in *Prophecy and Mysticism* ([T&T Clark, 1997], 26). The journey towards wholeness is not a one-time task. But in allowing ourselves to be vulnerable in friendship and fellowship with the Body of Christ, we model membership of an interconnected community of life, where in time, healing can occur. And let’s not forget the joy and gift of eating together! If only Diana lived closer, I’d be inviting myself over now for a Mexican feast!

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Photo: Jan Kalish (@jankalishphotography)



Heritage Seeds and Kitchen Creativity

DIANA SALGADO

Vincenzo Campi, *Still Life* (cropped)

Recently my husband, a plant lover, decided that growing ordinary potatoes and courgettes in the garden was not risqué enough, and took us into the realm of heritage seeds. Also called heirloom varieties, these are vegetable cultivars that have been maintained for at least fifty years, usually without commercial support. They have typically arisen through a gardening family or community collecting seeds from their crops year after year, perhaps sharing



Pieter Aertsen, *The Vegetable Seller*

and swapping them within the community. The result is a variety that is adapted to local conditions of climate, soil, pests and diseases – and, no doubt, people’s aesthetic preferences. As a result, they often produce plants with distinctive features like unusual colours, patterns, shapes and sizes, as well as particular culinary uses. So far, so good: a fine example of the cultural mandate in action as people steward and cultivate the genetic resources of plants.

In the UK and the European Union, however, it’s illegal to sell crop

varieties unless they are included in a national list of approved varieties for an annual fee that seed suppliers need to cover. The laudable intention of the legislation, dating from the 1970s, is another form of stewardship: to manage what could be a chaotic market of often similar varieties traded under confusing names. A side effect, however, is the loss of genetic diversity: one kind of stewardship at loggerheads with another. Anyway, in this part of the world, “heritage” normally refers to varieties that cannot be found in shops or regular seed catalogues. How, then, did we acquire such seeds?

The answer lies in our membership of a scheme that supplies free heritage varieties. The Heritage Seed Library has a catalogue with a difference: no glossy photos or special promotions; varieties with more whimsical names than we’re used to; free seeds. How does this work? Each member pays an annual membership fee, and may choose six varieties each year on a first-come, first-served basis. The seeds duly arrive in little brown envelopes with block-printed names – then it’s up to us to grow them!

What would grow from such mysterious seeds? In most cases, pretty normal plants emerged – such as Mr Fearn’s Purple Flowered French beans and Uncle Bert’s Purple Kale (purple seems to be a heritage hue). We also tried Cantalun melon (why not?) and were rewarded with a mini specimen – its diminutive

proportions probably due to Uncle Bert and some broccoli smothering that part of the vegetable patch, indeed giving Mr Fearn a hard time too. When we finally dared to harvest and try it, the mini melon was reassuringly familiar: a sweet, orange-fleshed cantaloupe. But the star of our show was Georgia Candy Roaster. Three squash plants germinated nicely and grew into fine trailing plants that sneaked along the garden path and across the potato patch. It gradually became clear that each plant was maturing one large fruit, with a respectable oval shape and tan colour. And the culinary experience? Despite its middle name, the cooked flesh tasted anything but sweet. But the most striking feature of this fruit was the large, fat seeds. When cooked with the flesh, they resembled broad beans (including the creamy texture) – not my favourite, so imagine my face!

Yet redemption was at hand! When baked on a tray in the oven, the seeds were deliciously crunchy with a nutty roast flavour, enhanced by a little salt. Additionally, the flesh is a wonderful mashed potato substitute. Do try my recipe for fish pie made with a non-sweet heritage squash.



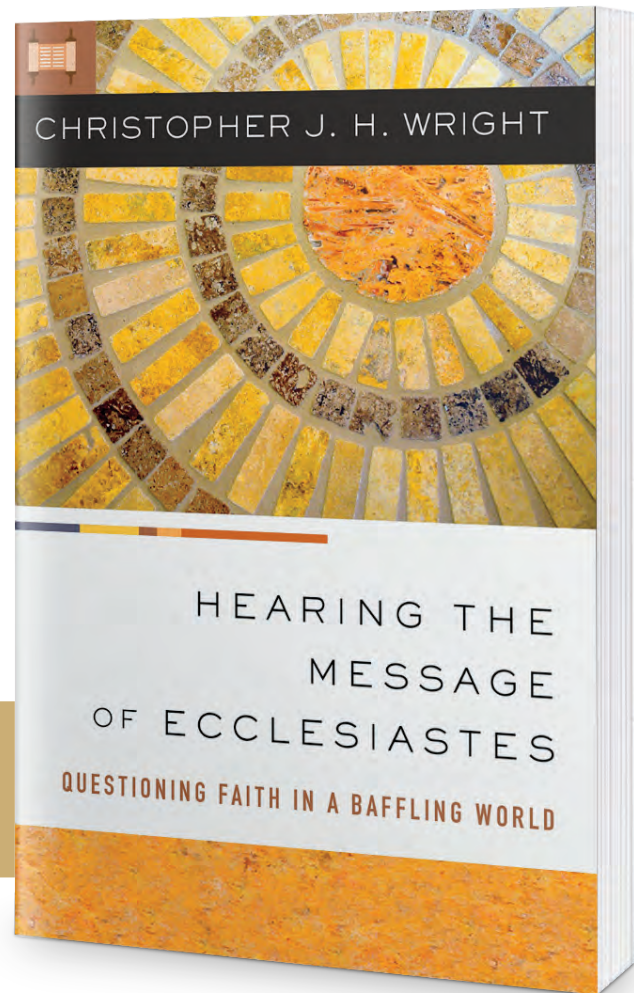
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