THE BIG PICTURE

LENT 2025
THE KIRBY LAING CENTRE

CHRIST PLAYS IN TEN THOUSAND PLACES

Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Blooming Coral Tree*

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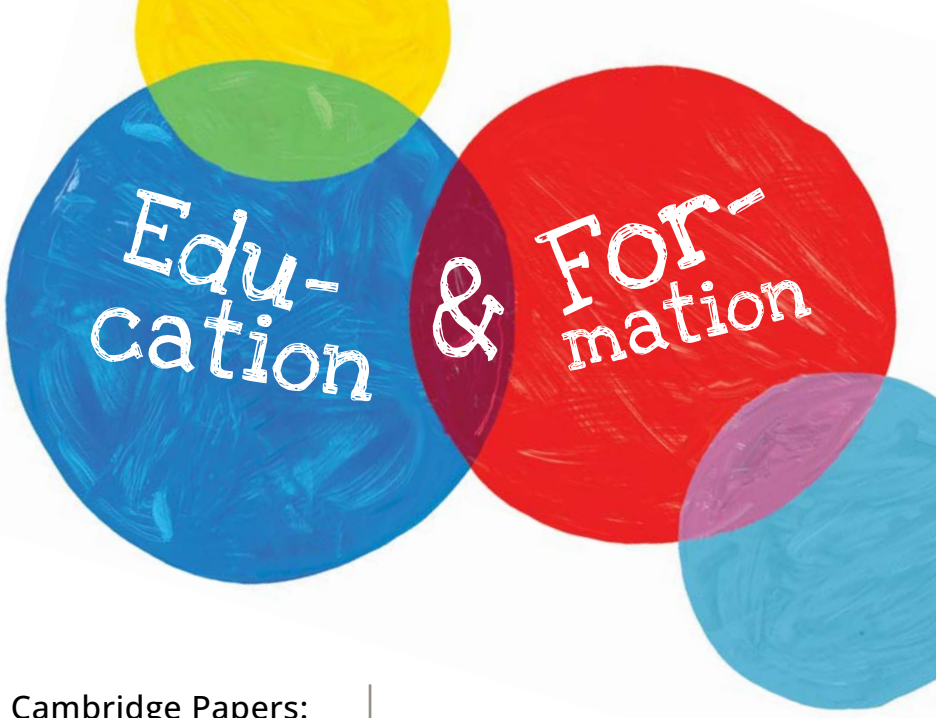

The Big Picture is produced by the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge, a non-profit academic research centre whose vision is to foster Christian scholarship and public theology, rooted in spirituality and practised in community, for the glory of God and the flourishing of the church and world. Our resources and events are all aimed at exploring answers to the question: How then should we live?

The Big Picture seeks to: (1) Educate, inform and inspire readers about public theology, (2) Ground our work in Scripture, (3) Embody the big-picture vision of the gospel with creativity, (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.

Please be aware that the articles that we choose to publish have not been selected because they reflect an official KLC position or the views of the editors. Our aims above encourage deep discussion of a plurality of views, across traditions, within the broad boundaries of the gospel. We celebrate difference without division.

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COVER ARTWORK

Hervé Tullet, *Ronds 23*, from *Press Here*, (Chronicle Books, used with permission). We chose Tullet's painting for our cover because it is joyful, colourful and evokes childhood – that period with which we most associate education and formation. However, as an advocate for the recovery of creative freedom in all stages of life, Tullet's work reminds us that our formation is never complete. We are always being shaped and always being invited to participate more consciously in that shaping.

kirbylaingcentre.co.uk

Photo: Allec Gomes

From the Director

CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW

"God's instruction is found authoritatively in his Word but is also embedded in his world, and our minds need to be fully engaged as we explore both."

These are tumultuous times. Donald Trump has been re-elected as president of the USA, Russia is rattling its sabre again as Ukraine makes use of longer-distance western missiles, and today, as I write, the news came through that the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif.

Doubtless, our readers will have a range of views about such matters, and it is not the mission of KLC to prescribe the views you should hold on such vital issues. What it is our mission to insist upon is that *we think hard and carefully about them*. Take the charges against Netanyahu, Gallant and Deif. It is an understatement to assert that they are desperately serious. Or reflect on what another term of a Trump presidency will mean for the USA and the world.

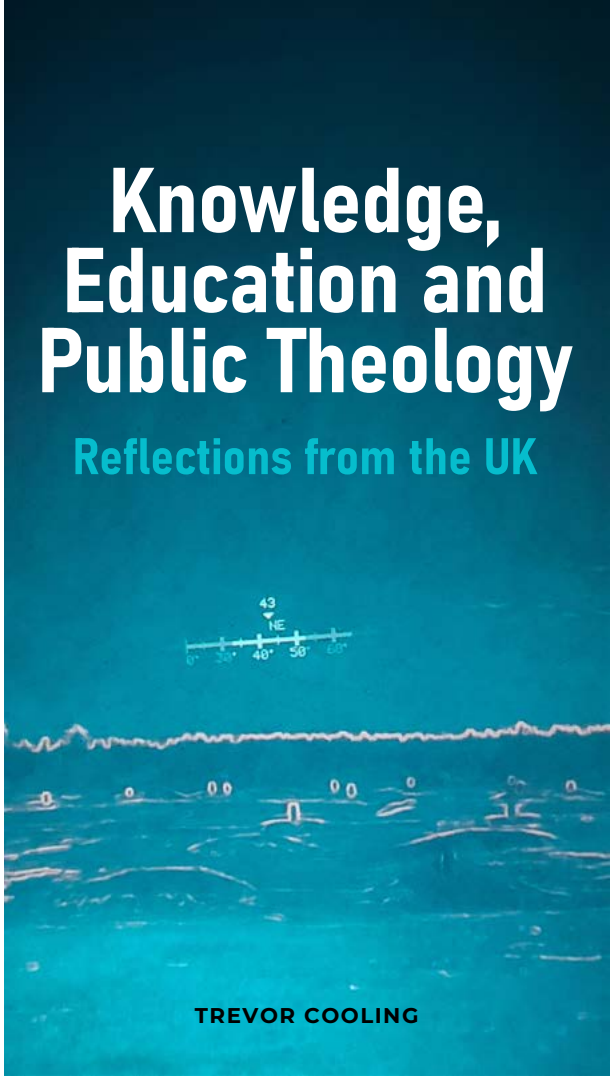
It is in this context that we publish this edition of *TBP*, focused on formation and education. It would be hard to stress these two entities too much. I learnt years ago in apartheid South Africa that while conversion is crucial – you must be born again! – by itself it is insufficient for the church to be salt and light. Far too many white South Africans were genuinely converted but remained racist. Conversion must be followed by ongoing formation and education, by what the Bible calls sanctification.

And formation is of the whole person, of heart and head. Biblically the heart is the centre of the human person and it is out of the heart that emotion and thought issue forth. The heart is the primary place of relationship to God, and as in Psalm 119:32, the heart needs to be expanded by the Spirit, so that we can run the way of God's instruction. God's instruction is found authoritatively in his Word but is also embedded in his world, and our minds need to be fully engaged as we explore both.

Scripture orients us authoritatively towards the world. Take politics, for example. As I have argued elsewhere,[1] the Bible has very important things to teach us about politics. However politics as we know it today has developed over thousands of years so that in many cases we err if we simply try and read the Bible straight into our political contexts today, in relation, for example, to the issues referred to above. For example, during apartheid many white South Africans invoked Romans 13:1-7 – the government is appointed by God – to justify all sorts of terrible abuses of power and racism. This was a dreadful mistake.

There is a complexity to relating the Bible to contemporary issues. Hence the need for education, for the formation of our minds so that in the light of God's Word we can explore with rigour and depth his ways in our world and how to align ourselves with them. In this edition of *TBP* you will find a diverse range of articles primarily, but by no means exclusively, related to education and formation. May they invite us to explore these wonderful themes anew, with our hearts and heads fully engaged.

1 See, for example, *Old Testament Wisdom and Politics*.



Knowledge is the commodity education deals in. In the UK, just prior to the general election that he lost, Rishi Sunak, the then Conservative Prime Minister, told his Party conference that he would see that "proper knowledge" was taught in schools rather than "Labour ideology". As I write, the new Labour government is launching its own Curriculum Review. This happens against a background where school inspectors look for a knowledge-rich curriculum. This article explores what public theologians might have to say about "proper knowledge" in education.

Neutrality

Just a little over fifty years ago, I sat in an undergraduate class listening to our highly acclaimed philosophy professor, Paul Hirst. He told us that there were two types of education – sophisticated that depends on reason alone and primitive that depends on faith. (No value judgements implied here!) As Steven Pinker, the enlightenment philosopher, recently wrote: "To take something on faith means to believe it without good reason."[1] In other words, faith has nothing to do with proper knowledge. Proper knowledge is faith neutral.

At the heart of the neutrality thesis is the notion that education is about the transmission of settled facts. These facts, it is said, are either derived from reason alone or are the agreed consensus of society. The epitome of the former is the popular view of scientific knowledge and of the latter is the British government's requirement that schools teach so-called British values. Settled facts are neutral, constituting the proper knowledge to be passed on through the education system.

Christian Reformed theologians and philosophers have long challenged this flawed neutrality hypothesis, offering instead the notion of worldview. By this they mean that our knowledge of the world cannot be separated from our Christian faith. This echoes missiologist Lesslie Newbigin's observation that western culture separates fact from value. His prescription was that a missionary encounter with this culture should draw on Michael Polanyi's insight that all knowledge is personal. What then are the implications of this Christian understanding of worldview and knowledge for teachers in a public education system?

Distinctively Christian

The Church of England oversees 4000+ state-funded schools that it wants to be "distinctively Christian." Its inspection system requires them to have a theologically rooted vision and to be able to demonstrate how that is implemented. But what does it mean to teach knowledge in a distinctively Christian way, for it to be personal?

I will seek to offer an answer to this question with a case study drawn from a research project investigating how teachers interpreted the aspiration to be distinctively Christian.[2] It involves a Physical Education teacher working with a group of 12-year-old boys.

> As a Christian, James (a pseudononym) was concerned to challenge the impact that professional soccer had on his students. Overwhelmingly they looked to their superhero players as models of what success meant in life – fame, wealth, adulation, etc. Their view of sport was shaped by the aspiration to become an elite performer. James wanted to offer them a different model of success based on being a servant leader.

1 Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress* (London: Penguin, 2018), 30.

2 Trevor Cooling et al., *Christian Faith in English Church Schools: Research Conversations with Classroom Teachers* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016); and David I. Smith, *On Christian Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

The case study is a lesson on the push-pass in field hockey. This started with a whole class demonstration of the techniques involved. Then he put the boys into pairs and asked them to improve each other's techniques. The assignment was to report back on how best they could improve their partner's performance. In the subsequent focus group with the researchers, the pupils were asked what they thought they were doing in the lesson. The response was: "We were helping each other to become better hockey players". This lesson is but one example of how the teacher reframed his whole approach.

There are several important things to note here:

This was not a sports lesson with a Bible message tagged on. The teacher did not turn his lesson into a religion class. Rather he framed his teaching with the concept of coaching rather than the widely assumed concept of elite performance, thereby reshaping the pupils' understanding of the purpose of sport. By so doing, he offered a theologically rooted, anthropological vision of what it means to flourish as a human being and what constitutes success in life.

It was the pedagogical practice employed in the lesson that conveyed the distinctively Christian approach to technical knowledge as much as the words of the teacher.

The knowledge offered in this class was not simply the settled facts about how best to execute the push pass, but was the personal knowledge of how sport is perceived as a significant human activity.

Knowledge and Worldview in Education

This approach to knowledge draws on work in biblical hermeneutics (interpretation) by scholars like Anthony Thiselton and Kevin Vanhoozer. The insights they offer are that ontological truth matters and is revealed through Scripture but reading Scripture is a fallible human activity that is influenced by the reader's context, interests and worldview and for that reason interpretations can be wrong. A deplorable example is how the South African Dutch Reformed Church found *apartheid* in the Bible. Biblical hermeneutics alerts us that knowledge is generated by human interpretation and the fallibility of the human persona means that people disagree on these interpretations. To be a scholar according to biblical hermeneutics is to seek true understanding of the world through the lens of biblical ideas whilst maintaining a healthy suspicion of the way that our personal worldview can distort that. It is to remember that although Scripture teaches with clarity, the implications of what it teaches in the concrete experience of day-to-day life is open to legitimate disagreement. Being a scholarly knower therefore entails developing virtues like humility in relation to our own views and curiosity about those of others alongside the commitment to there being truth that applies to all humans.

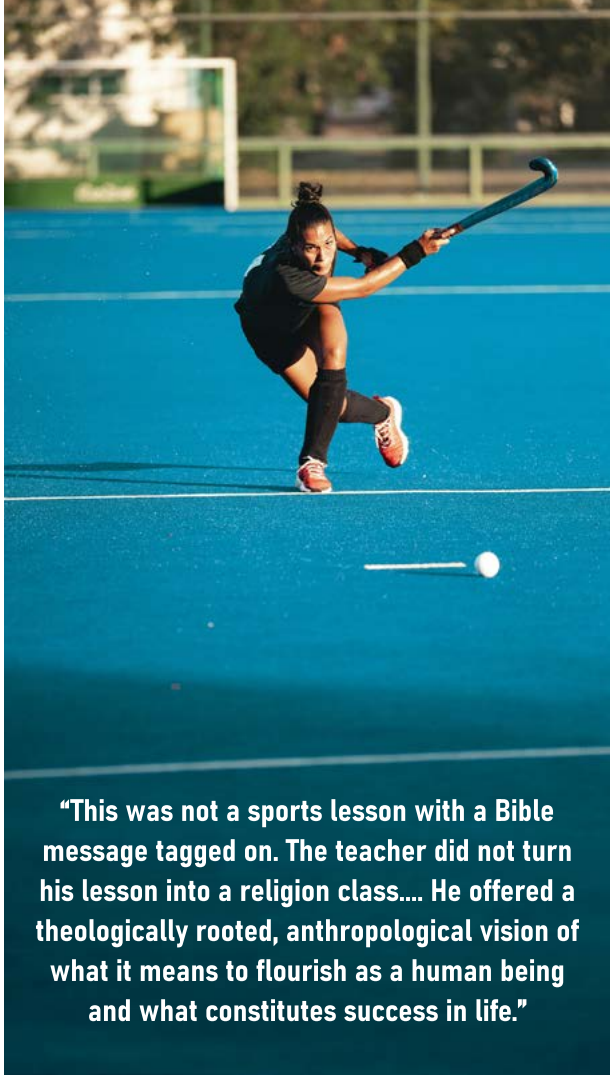
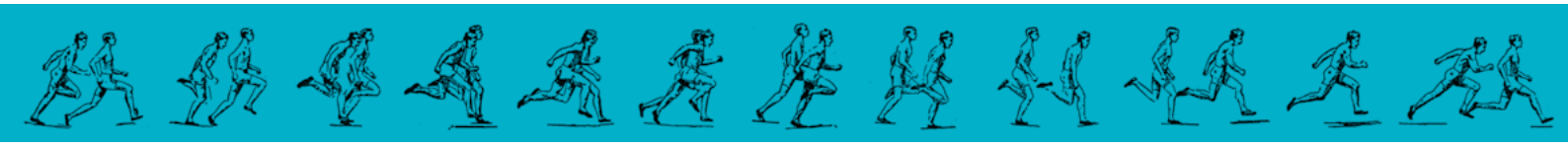
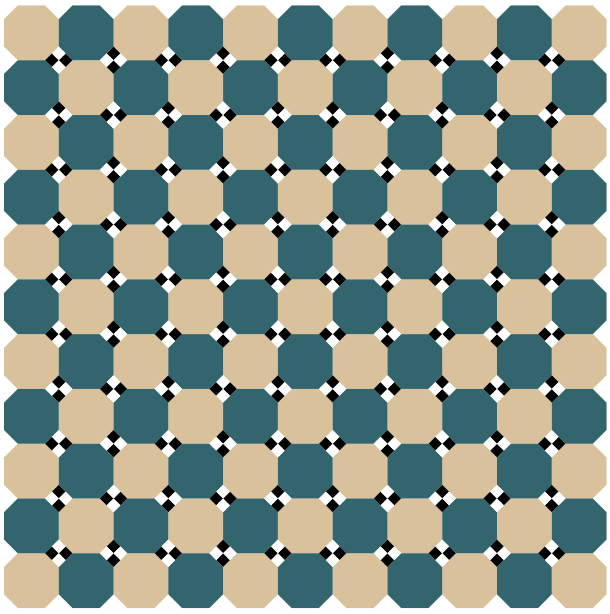


Photo: Fellipe Ditadi

"This was not a sports lesson with a Bible message tagged on. The teacher did not turn his lesson into a religion class.... He offered a theologically rooted, anthropological vision of what it means to flourish as a human being and what constitutes success in life."

How then do these insights from biblical hermeneutics impact on a Christian contribution to knowledge in public education? Our PE teacher illustrates this well. First there are anthropological truths that Christians hold to which can be drawn on, then explained to and discussed with pupils. These often are deeply attractive to others as well as being increasingly counter cultural. They offer an alternative framing whereby teachers and pupils can see their subject anew. This is what Newbigin described as a missionary encounter with culture where a Christian contribution to the common good is offered. Education is never neutral. James' offering of servant leadership as opposed to elite performance in sport as the framing concept for his approach to PE is a telling example.





Objectively, this image is a checkerboard comprised of parallel lines. Subjectively, however, it tricks our perception into reading the lines as angled.

However, and something which Christians sometimes ignore, learning is about making wise interpretive judgements for oneself and not just accepting what others tell you. This means that Christian teachers need to be open as to how their worldview is shaping their work. It also means that students need to become aware of the impact of their own worldview on the development of their personal knowledge. Learning should never be presented to them as just a process of collecting and regurgitating information from memory. It is rather learning to make wise judgements.

Finally, discovering true knowledge requires the exercise of virtues like humility, curiosity, empathy and so forth. It entails acknowledging that other people reach different conclusions because their worldview is different and learning to disagree well in the public realm. Knowledge and character are conjoined siblings.

I finish with two examples of how this aspiration is currently manifested in English state schools.

First, by emphasizing how knowledge growth and character development go hand-in-hand. For example, the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, a group of Christian schools, describes itself as: "Providing Christian-ethos schools of character for the whole community." In these, knowledge acquisition is seen as the growth of persons and not merely as the accumulation of information in the long-term memory.[3]

Second, in Religious Education.[4] This subject is compulsory for all students and embraces the major religious communities and humanists. It has recently shifted from a World Religions approach, which aims to give pupils information about different religious and non-religious traditions, to a Religion and Worldviews approach, which encourages pupils to reflect on their own worldview development through their study of religious and non-religious traditions.

Conclusion

A Christian understanding of "proper knowledge" is then that it is personal. It cannot be amputated from a person's identity, shaped as it is by their worldview. It is never faith-free. This insight has massive implications for education. Instead of being largely transmission of neutral, settled information, it is learning to be a wise, hermeneutical scholar. This entails a commitment to the search for truth and to reflexivity on the impact of our worldview on our own and others' interpretation of what we are taught. This means that growing in knowledge is about insight into our personal worldview and those of others.

Trevor Cooling is Emeritus Professor of Christian Education at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.

3 https://www.emmanuelcollege.org.uk/about/emmanuel-schools-foundation/

4 https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2020/10/21/worldviews-in-religious-education

"Fish or fowl?" asks this ambiguous tile pattern by Mauritz Escher.

Arthur Rackham, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1907)

Why I Start every Graduate Lecture with a Children's Book

JULIE CANLIS

The best thing that ever happened to my teaching was to finish my PhD in the maternity ward, with a newborn on my left knee and thesis corrections on my right. Although it is true that one might "birth" a dissertation, it is at that point the author who needs to grow. In the raising of my four children, my true education began. I was manhandled by those strict taskmasters. They decided to unmake me and remake me. They became my pedagogues. Their tools were joy, helplessness and relationship.

Disconcertingly, the very things that had helped me "accomplish" a PhD needed to be ungrown and unlearned. And so, in moving to a backwater village in northern Scotland to raise children and teach Sunday School, I began to grow both as a theologian and as an educator. While their growth was forward, mine seemed to be relentlessly backward.

My friends were worried that we were moving from the hustle and bustle of academia (and a proper town and proper friends) to a hamlet where we knew no one, and that my PhD would be buried. That was all true. But it was there, in gardening with my children and planting seeds, that I began to understand that unless a grain of wheat dies, it cannot produce fruit.

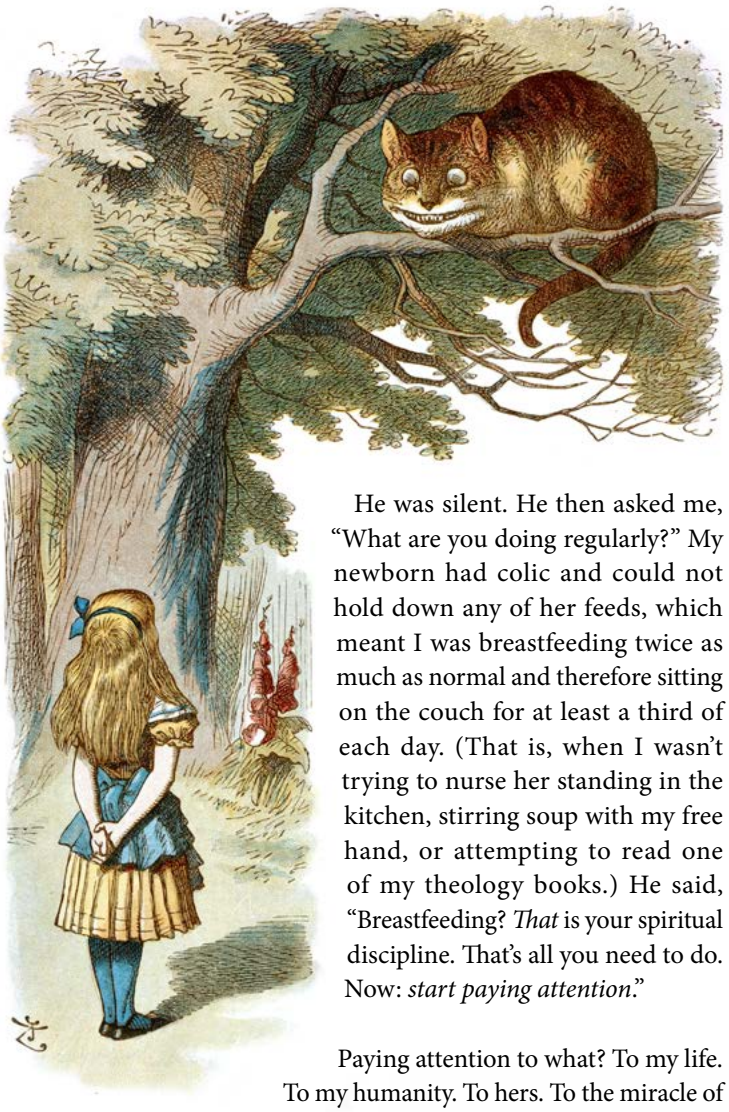
In the confinement of my physical location, as well as the physicality of motherhood, my "ideas" had time to incubate, to move from the darkness of abstraction to the hopes of the daylight of reality. The worst part of writing a dissertation about God, or any aspect of the sanctified life, is that the subject matter makes intimate demands on one's person. If it does not make such demands, then it has been an exercise in historical theology, logic or something else. But to write about "God" means to enter a conversation already begun, to take up a question already asked. I had been summoned by the subject matter. Doing a PhD in theology involves occupational hazards, and as with every occupation, those hazards are often unanticipated.

In my case, I felt in debt to my subject. I experienced myself in its shadow. *Was I becoming more human in Christ?* How could one measure that? What right did I have to write about such a topic – let alone teach about it? I tried to *think* my way into this new reality. Whenever any child took a nap, I frantically sat down in my little corner chair and opened a book of theology to which I had promised myself I would return. More often than not, I fell asleep. Or was angered by the child who would not sleep. I felt myself suspended between the humanity I wrote about and the human I was.

John Tenniel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)

Once we had a visit from a former professor, Eugene Peterson, who first inspired my love of theology. He did not inspire me to love the discipline of theology, but to love living itself. He is the one who, when I told him I had the chance to do postgraduate work in Scotland, said, "Julie, I think you should get the PhD. And then make sure you get the hell out." Well, I had gotten the hell out. But now I was in a personal hell of my own making, unable to fully commit to being a dark seed in the ground, worrying that I was supposed to be doing something *else*.

I wept when I told Eugene that I was living in the shadow of the summons. I was not living up to my dissertation. I needed a spiritual discipline. I needed a goal – if he could give me one – and then I could reach it. I just didn't know what the goal should be.



He was silent. He then asked me, "What are you doing regularly?" My newborn had colic and could not hold down any of her feeds, which meant I was breastfeeding twice as much as normal and therefore sitting on the couch for at least a third of each day. (That is, when I wasn't trying to nurse her standing in the kitchen, stirring soup with my free hand, or attempting to read one of my theology books.) He said, "Breastfeeding? *That* is your spiritual discipline. That's all you need to do. Now: *start paying attention*."

Paying attention to what? To my life. To my humanity. To hers. To the miracle of life and growth and things that only germinate in the dark. This was my dissertation in action. This was the realm of the Father, Son and Spirit. And I was missing it.

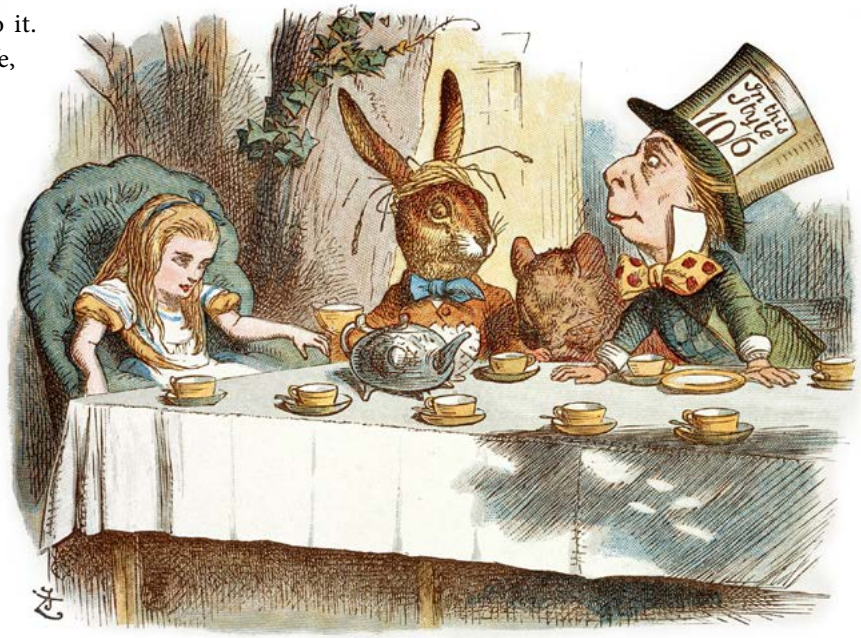
I was ignoring the only context in which theology makes sense. Theology is not about the transmission of information, or the apprehension of a correct interpretation. Theology – good theology – is that which enables us to live more deeply and fully into our humanity. Such living is our summons by the One in whom we discover what it means to be human – the one who shows us what true humanity looks like. We are never called out of our humanity, but always deeper into it. Every misunderstanding about the spiritual life, as George MacDonald once said, springs from disbelief in God's own humanity.[1]

Being a mother every moment of every day forced me to take my humanity seriously in ways that writing my dissertation on "being human in Christ" did not. Simply being human thrusts us into the heart of spirituality because it pulls us into work that involves our bodies and other peoples' bodies, and it continually engages us in Jesus' body. Our bodies are the only admission ticket we have to the spiritual life. We see this in the Eucharist, of course, but we also see this in our family meals, our getting dressed and undressed, in walking our children to school, in our desperate need for sleep, and in euphoric moments of beauty. Our "body" signifies the whole person, the totality of our ability to be present to one another. Offering our bodies as our daily worship means that we minister in embodied ways, as embodied people, to an embodied world. *This* is our "spiritual" worship.

Jesus' resurrected body is the key. In it, the Spirit and our solid physicality are forever united, forever being poured out for the sake of the world. Jesus' body is an eternal spring of life for our souls and bodies. And it is only *through our bodies* that we participate in the source of the new creation. None of this happens in our minds. Paul got dunked in water. Jesus gave his disciples a meal to eat. Our entrance into the spiritual life is through water and food and materiality. Rather than becoming more "spiritual," life in the Spirit is now more concrete, more embodied, more "solid" because Christ's ascended body has forever bound the flesh and Spirit together.

Teaching theology must involve our and our students' bodies. It must involve our GPS location as humans embedded in relationships and places on this planet. It must beckon us deeper into our own humanity and into how our humanity relates to the humanity of Jesus. Because it is only here that we – and he – can be found. C. S. Lewis contends that God gives us new life through bread and wine, evidence of his high regard for material things and that he did not intend us to be purely spiritual beings. Being their creator, God approves of eating and matter.[2]

John Tenniel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)



1 George MacDonald, *The Hope of the Gospel and the Miracles of Our Lord*. The Works of George MacDonald. (Camas, WA, 2023), chapter 7.

2 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Harper Collins, 1952, 2001), 63.

And this is why I start every graduate lecture with food – food and a children's book. This amounts to between fifteen to twenty books per semester (and a lot of snacks). I do this because I have learned that the goal of theological education is to teach us to become like little children. To grow ourselves downwards (Matt 18). To enter in through the way of littleness. When everyone begins class with crumbs on their face and exhibits slack-jawed listening to a children's book, the need to "master" and "impress" vanish, at least for a little while.

Karl Barth intuited this, defending his *Church Dogmatics* as "youth instruction on a higher grade."[3] He believed every practical issue we face is at root theological, and likewise theology does not exist for its own sake. Theology must make us more childlike.

When I begin a lecture with a carefully chosen children's book, I bypass theological categories and move straight into integration. I work with the impact of theology upon a life that even a child can recognize. Later, I dis-integrate the material, pull it apart, analyze it, and do all the things we need to do to attend to history, meaning and technique of theology. But I always close with integration (usually with prayer). For my students, these children's books become the most referenced part of my lectures, since they move systematics into play. The books embed theology in life, accessible even to children.

We, along with our students, are in God's nursery. The goal of theological education must be to strip us of theological pretense and teach us to pray-play. Simply that. We "teachers" all stand before Jesus as Nicodemus once did, and like him, we are called out for our resistance to becoming like children, our resistance to being born again. Perhaps as we find courage to be more in touch with our own fragmented childhoods, we can allow ourselves to be reparented by the triune God. We can become *persons* in Christ. Ricoeur's call to a second naivete is not just a prayer to utter for our students, but a perpetual one for ourselves.

Julie Canlis is a theologian and author. She is the Liturgical Director for Trinity Church (Wenatchee, WA), teaches at Whitworth University, runs a non-profit organisation, Godspeed, and is an Associate Fellow of the KLC.

Our thanks to Baylor University Press for permission to print this article, the full version of which is a chapter in Adam Neder, ed., Teaching Theology: Essays Personal and Theological *(Waco: Baylor University Press, forthcoming).*

3 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 48.

Arthur Rackham, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1907)

Children's books that I use include:

Walter Wangerin Jr., *In the Beginning There Was No Sky*

Jeanne Willis and Bryony Mae Smith, *Stardust*

Jane G. Meyer, *The Woman and the Wheat*

Jane G. Meyer, *The Man and the Vine*

Claire Brandenburg, *The Monk Who Grew Prayer*

Katherine Paterson, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*

Sheldon Oberman, *The Always Prayer Shawl*

Amy Schwartz, *Mrs. Moskowitz and the Sabbath Candlesticks*

Mem Fox, *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*

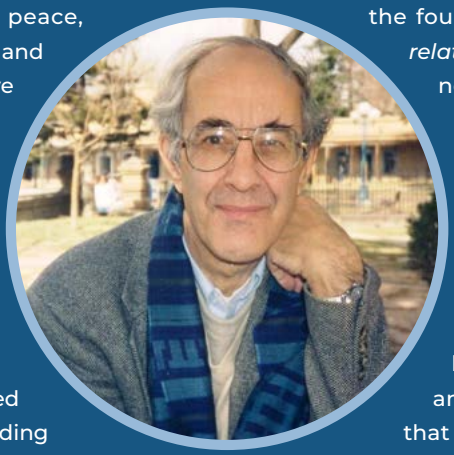
Mordicai Gerstein, *The White Ram*

Jeff Brumbeau, *The Quiltmaker's Gift*

Henri Nouwen:
A Legacy of Spiritual Wisdom and Educational Excellence

BRUCE ADEMA

Henri Nouwen (1932–1996) remains one of the most influential spiritual guides of the 20th century. His profound reflections on faith, human suffering, and the Christian journey continue to resonate deeply with readers worldwide. With over forty books to his name, Nouwen's wisdom has become a cornerstone of contemporary spiritual literature, and his words are often cited by writers, preachers, and thinkers across the globe. His insights on peace, social justice, mental health, anxiety, and the transformative power of love have guided countless individuals on their spiritual journeys. Yet, alongside his rich spiritual legacy, Nouwen's work as an educator is often overlooked but equally impactful.



A Teacher's Heart

Nouwen's academic career spanned several prestigious institutions, including the University of Notre Dame (1966–1968), Catholic Theological University of Utrecht (1968–1970), Yale Divinity School (1971–1981), and Harvard Divinity School (1983–1985). His reputation as a teacher was legendary, with classrooms often overflowing, as students flocked to hear him speak. But Nouwen's approach to teaching was far from conventional. His classroom was not a space for the mere transfer of information; it was a sacred place of dialogue, reflection, and mutual growth. Even after stepping away from full-time academic positions, he continued to be in demand as a guest lecturer, sharing his wisdom at various institutions and offering guidance both inside and outside the classroom.

The Centrality of Relationships

What set Nouwen apart was his emphasis on relationships – both with God and with others. Ordained as a Roman Catholic priest and deeply committed to his theological studies, Nouwen pursued graduate-level research in psychology, which informed his understanding of human relationships. For Nouwen, a healthy life was rooted in authentic, loving connections, and he saw the relationship between teacher and student as central to the educational process.

In his teachings on spirituality, Nouwen posed the foundational question: *"What is your relationship with God?"* He rejected the notion of a distant, impersonal deity and instead highlighted a deeply intimate connection between Creator and created. For Nouwen, God's love was not conditional or transactional, it was a foundational truth of the universe. "You were created because God loves you," he taught, and every gift, talent, and opportunity is an expression of that love. This vision of God as a loving, relational presence shaped Nouwen's understanding of both spirituality and education.

In his book *Reaching Out*, Nouwen eloquently captures his educational philosophy, grounded in the concept of mutual relationship. He envisioned education not as the mere transfer of knowledge but as a dynamic, life-changing exchange between teacher and student:

> Teaching, therefore, asks first of all the creation of a space where students and teachers can enter into a fearless communication with each other and allow their respective life experiences to be their primary and most valuable source of growth and maturation. It asks for a mutual trust in which those who teach and those who want to learn can become present to each other, not as opponents, but as those who share in the same struggle and search for the same truth.[1]

1 Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 60.

Reframing the Classroom: Beyond the Lecture

Nouwen's approach to education was far from the traditional lecture model, where a teacher stands at the front of the classroom, dispensing information without regard for student engagement. He believed in creating a learning environment where students and teachers could meet as equals in a shared search for truth.

Imagine, instead, a classroom where the teacher is not a distant authority but an active participant in the educational process. Nouwen often punctuated his lectures with moments of stillness or Taizé chants, inviting students into a reflective, communal space that transcended the academic grind. His students often reported feeling as if, despite being part of a large class, Nouwen was speaking directly to each of them as individuals. His genuine interest in their lives, well-being, and intellectual growth made his classrooms places of transformation.

This was not one-sided: Nouwen was not only a teacher; he was a learner as well. He understood that the teacher-student relationship is reciprocal. He believed that both parties had valuable lessons to teach each other, creating a symbiotic dynamic where both could grow in wisdom and understanding.

Trust: The Foundation of Educational Relationships

For Nouwen, the key to a fruitful educational experience was trust. He recognized that mutual trust between teacher and student was essential for true learning to take place. A teacher must demonstrate a genuine concern for the student's well-being and growth, while students must trust that their teachers are invested in their success and development.

Trust, in Nouwen's view, creates an environment in which both teacher and student can be vulnerable, ask questions, and explore ideas freely. This creates an atmosphere where learning becomes a shared journey, not a transaction. It is within this trusting relationship that both parties can experience personal transformation – students grow intellectually, while teachers find joy in seeing their students evolve.

The Pursuit of Truth

Nouwen's educational philosophy was anchored in the belief that education's highest goal is the pursuit of truth. But this truth is not limited to the world of facts and figures; it is also the deeper truth of who we are as human beings and the spiritual truths that bind us together. Nouwen believed that education should help students uncover three great lies that many people internalize: that we are what we do, that we are what we have, and that we are what others say about us.

Through education, Nouwen envisioned a process by which students could unlearn these lies and discover their inherent value and dignity. He believed that all knowledge, whether in mathematics, philosophy, or ethics, must be situated in the larger truth of human worth and divine love. In a world increasingly marred by misinformation and superficiality, Nouwen's vision of education as a pathway to deeper truth is more relevant than ever.

As John F. Kennedy once noted, education is about "the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth."[2] For Nouwen, this truth was not just about the academic subjects but about the profound realities of human existence and divine love. His educational philosophy provides a powerful framework for fostering both intellectual and spiritual development.

A Lasting Legacy

Henri Nouwen's contributions to spirituality and education are inseparable. His vision of education, rooted in relationship, trust, and truth, continues to influence educators, theologians, and spiritual leaders. By fostering an environment where love, respect, and mutual growth are central, Nouwen created a model of education that transcended the classroom and extended into the lives of his students and readers.

His legacy is one of profound wisdom, compassion, and a deep commitment to human flourishing. Henri Nouwen remains a guiding light for those seeking to grow in faith, understanding, and relationship – with God, with others, and with themselves.

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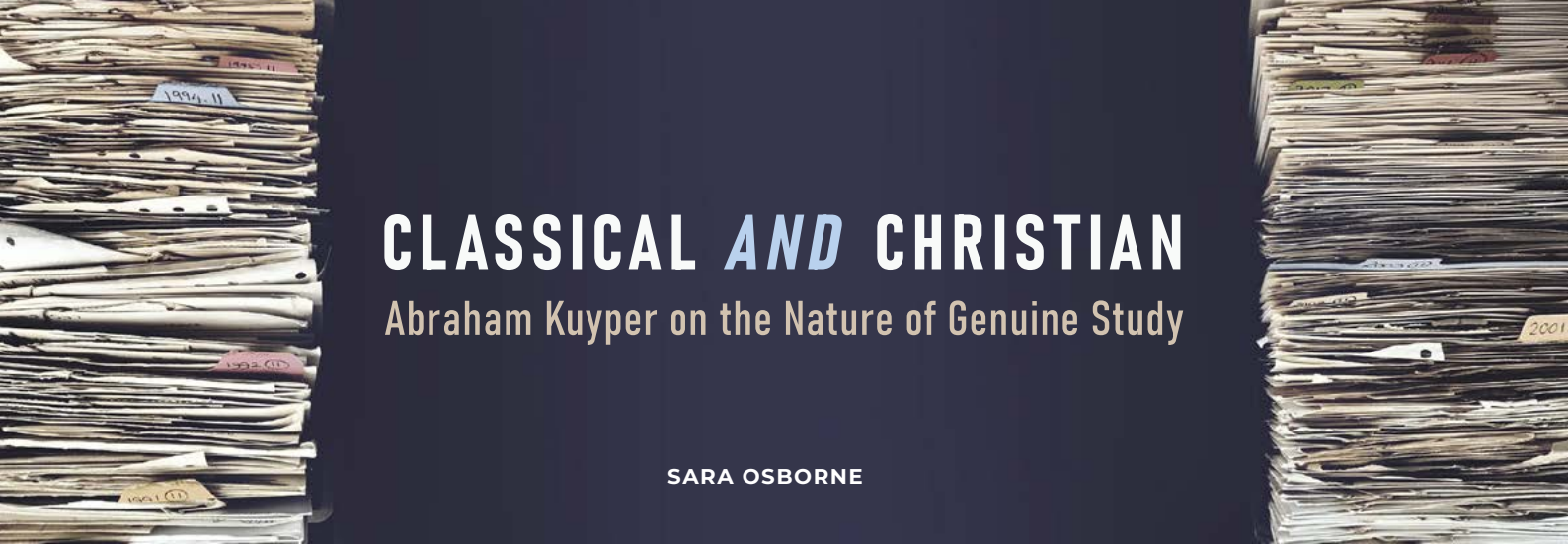
2 https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/harvard-university-19560614

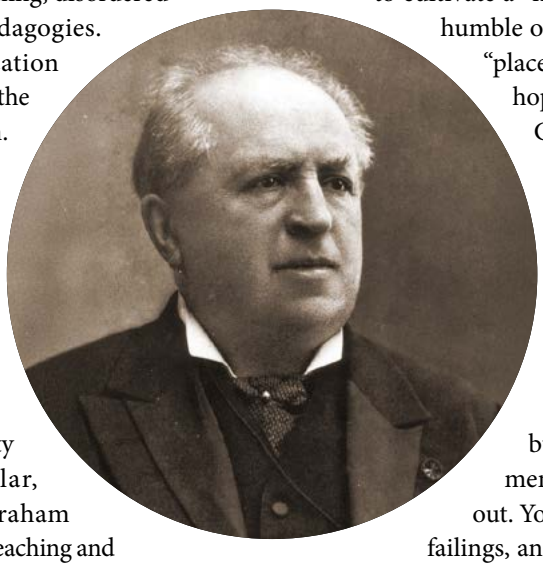


CLASSICAL *AND* CHRISTIAN

Abraham Kuyper on the Nature of Genuine Study

SARA OSBORNE

The classical renewal has been prompted – at least in part – by evident student skill and knowledge deficits, virtue-less environments for learning, disordered curricula, and postmodern pedagogies. However, a true classical education aims to do more than simply plug the holes of a failing public education. If the purpose of genuine study is to know, analyze, and articulate what is True, Good, and Beautiful, the truest form of such education is a classical *Christian* one.



In his 1889 address[1] to students and teachers at the Free University of Amsterdam, Dutch scholar, theologian, and statesman Abraham Kuyper reflects on the purpose of teaching and learning: "[God] created us as logical beings in order that we should trace his Logos, investigate it, publish it, and personally wonder at it, and fill others with wonder." This call of the Christian scholar reflects the dearest priorities of classical learning: to know what is true, to study in pursuit of understanding, to cultivate wonder, and to articulate that wondrous message to others. For Kuyper, the very trajectory of true education begins with faith:

> God is gracious and compassionate, and by means of his revelation and the founding of his church he had from the beginning ignited a glow that faith imbibed and that enriched an Abraham and a Moses far beyond what any nineteenth century learning is capable of – rich in their heart, rich in their soul, rich in those more tender sensations that bear the mark of the eternal. And scholars, far from being able to do without that faith, must begin by being rich in that faith if they are ever to feel their heart stir with the holy impulse that drives them to engage in true scholarship.

In essence, Kuyper viewed scholarship as a sacred calling; in his words to teachers and students he sought to cultivate a "holy awareness" of this task. This humble occupation, for Kuyper, means to "place yourself with all your academic hopes and dreams before the face of God in such a way that praying for your studies flows naturally from it and is not attached to it as an afterthought." Explicitly Christian scholarship means "to serve and not to be served" – and this is not a posture merely meant for students. Professors, too, "are not … commanders but … fellow soldiers … They are men whom you don't avoid but seek out. You are not blind to their faults and failings, and you gently poke fun at them in order to improve them. But in the end, you know that they share one holy calling with you."

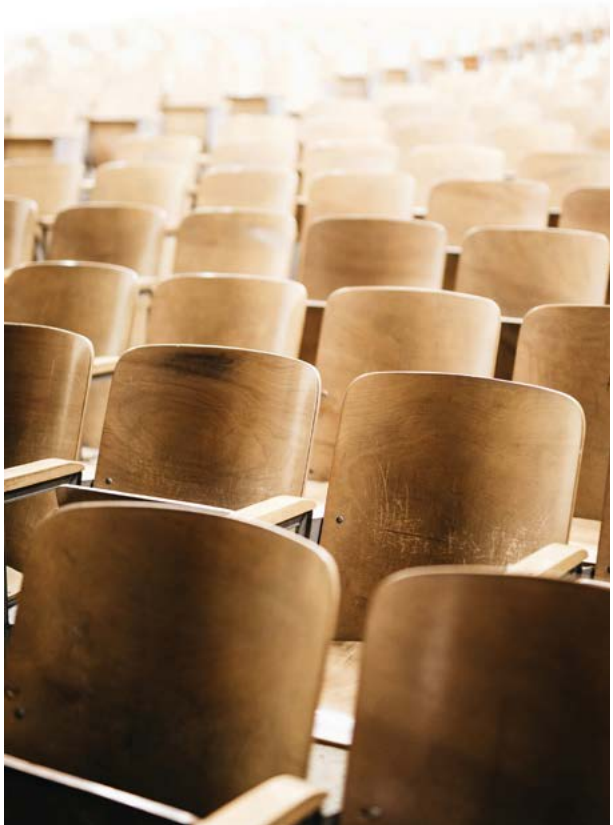
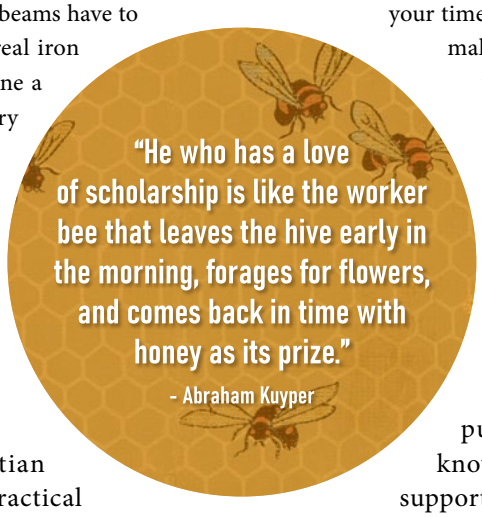


Photo: Nathan Dumlao

1 All quotations in this article come from Abraham Kuyper, "The Secret of Genuine Study (1889)," in *On Education*, ed. Wendy Naylor, trans. Harry Van Dyke (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), 98-114.

Christian scholarship requires patient, committed study that is driven by love: "He who has a love of scholarship is like the worker bee that leaves the hive early in the morning, forages for flowers, and comes back in time with honey as its prize." Despite any immediate reward, this true student is after something more than knowledge and success; his aim is "the knowledge of the holy" (Proverbs 9:10). Accordingly, every fact he learns must be tested and tried through the sieve of discernment if wisdom is to be gained:

> The true student builds a proper house and takes care that his studies are done properly; the beams have to be real beams, the iron bolts of real iron and not of tin, and the cornerstone a real stone that can bear the necessary weight. This causes him to develop a sense of what is truth … After all, the man of science does not play loose and fast with the facts, but it is granted him to track down the gold of God's thoughts, the gems of divine wisdom, a labor that requires real discernment.



Kuyper's thoughts on Christian scholarship are not devoid of practical application; he argues that true study requires orderly work, attention to form, and a consideration of the body – tenets echoed in classical teaching and learning. For Kuyper, disordered study was the very antithesis of Christian scholarship. Students "are to build, and building demands a structured course of action." He exhorts scholars: "Don't just work, but think about how you work. Why this and not that? Why this first and that later? Don't just work through the books on your shelf, but proceed as demanded by your ability to absorb, in keeping with the organic interconnectedness of knowledge." Education should be sequentially appropriate, methodical, purposeful, and promote the connections between disciplines that true knowledge requires.

With all of his emphasis on the inner man and the pursuit of high ideas, it may come as a surprise that Kuyper did not neglect the way ideas were communicated. Scholarship finds its proper end in apt communication, enunciation, and form. In fact, he argues:

> Outward form is … crucial. You cannot dispense with it; your success, your future, your influence depend on it. Proper form will determine whether you will waste your time and energy in the world of science or make a lasting contribution to it – that is, whether you will answer to your God-given calling or forsake that calling. Of course I know that form can be hollow, artificial, false. God preserve you from it. But may God also preserve you from that levity that thinks: "The form will take care of itself."

Kuyper's articulation of the purposeful connection between knowledge and rhetoric doesn't just support classical pedagogy; it identifies how an explicitly *Christian* view of teaching and learning offers a true foundation for this approach. As the Christian scholar is called to humility, discernment, and careful study, so he is called to communicate truth with power and winsomeness to a needy world.

Kuyper rightly reminds us that all of this learning takes place in a mind that is housed in a physical body. He cautions the Christian scholar: "If you want to be devoted

Photos: NASA

Photo: Chris Lawton

"And in case difficulties await us, let us begin not with presumption but in humility. For our help is in the name of the Lord who made the heavens and the earth and therefore also made the world of thought and for that thought the world of study." - Abraham Kuyper

to things of the spirit, then make sure you don't begin to look like a spirit. If you are called to reflect on how things are interrelated, can you overlook the relations between yourself and your body?" His implied answer, of course, is that the mind-body connection cannot be ignored: "A *sana mens* dwells only in a *sana corpore*."[2]

For classical educators, there is much gold to be mined in Kuyper's thoughts on education. His writing offers wise counsel, yes, but it also offers an invitation to the passion and zeal that Kuyper himself brought to the scholarly task. Perhaps even more than his knowledge, classical educators and administrators might benefit from his contagious inspiration as we continue the task of Christian scholarship:

> Let there be a tremor of noble intentions in your hearts! Open your eyes wide and muster all your strength to really study hard this time. We your professors, we too have our hearts beating more rapidly now that we see you back. A lot is expected again of you and of us. Much will be demanded again from all of us this year. Very well; let us resume our task with … courage and Christian sense. And in case difficulties await us, let us begin not with presumption but in humility. For our help is in the name of the Lord who made the heavens and the earth and therefore also made the world of thought and for that thought the world of study.

Sara Osborne is Assistant Professor of English and Director of Classical Education at the College of the Ozarks. She is also an Associate Fellow of KLC.

2 "A healthy mind dwells only in a healthy body."

Photo: Moren Hsu

Spirituality as Be In Touch

to wonder

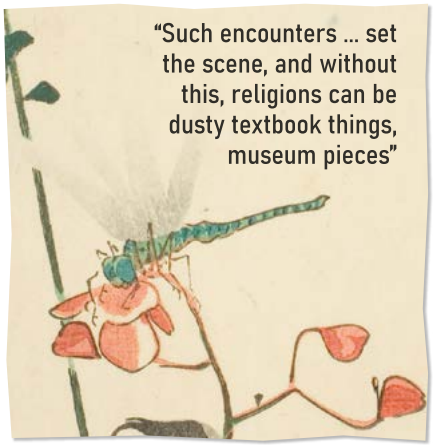
to feel

to share

KEVIN O'DONNELL

"Even an atheist has a spirituality."

I made that statement when I was a Head of Personal and Spiritual Development in a large UK Secondary School. I was ordained an Anglican priest and later worked for some years as a school chaplain. I wrote several books for Hodder Educational that provided courses for students to explore religions experientially, or what I referred to then as the "spirituality approach." These included Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.[1] It was on the cusp of a new direction which came to be named as "Learning from Religion" rather than "Learning about Religion" in the sense that ideas, experiences, and actions should touch aspects of our own lives that might have nothing to do with religious traditions explicitly. One of my student teachers from Oxford told me later that I was probably about ten years ahead of my time. I am not sure about that, but I was at least partly pioneering. What did experiential, spirituality or "Learning from …" mean?



The approach meant the awe of the sunset, the joy of its rise, the dew on a leaf, the flutter of a dragonfly wing, a gentle touch of affection, the wonder of a baby's first smile. Such encounters and experiences set the scene, and without this, religions can be dusty textbook things, museum pieces, or just alien and weird for many students not active in any faith. The alien quality was brought home to me whenever I asked students to imagine a new religion. The aim was to explore the basic ingredients such as awe, ethics and styles and places of worship. Too often, silly ideas resulted such as tying one leg behind your back and hopping so many times a day. And yet, and yet, that is how rituals can come across to an unconnected agnostic or atheist generation, or to those who state, "I am spiritual but not religious." One young student once protested, "But we haven't mentioned God, and it is nearly half term!" The fact is, they had been beginning to touch the hem of his garment all along. St John of the Cross captured this sentiment when he wrote: "My love, the mountains and the solitary wooded valleys, the unexpected islands … the music of a silence".[2]

Time passed, and I worked in parish ministry, becoming Catholic along the way. Owing to illness (a breakdown, becoming epileptic and then struggling with PTSD), I had to leave this and now have the time to reflect, study and write as well as finding peace and ministry in a beautiful

1 Kevin O'Donnell, *The Jewish Experience, the Christian Experience, the Muslim Experience, the Hindu Experience* (London: Hodder Educational, 2000).

2 *The Poems of Saint John of the Cross*, translated by Wills Barnstone. (New York: New Directions Books, 1972), 47.

basilica and place of pilgrimage in France.[3] I received my doctorate a couple of years ago that explores spirituality in the oeuvre of the Bulgarian/French semiologist and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva. Kristeva seems to be little known in the UK but reading her, though difficult at first, can be invigorating and crosses genres and traditions. She declares herself to be an atheist but has a great respect for belief, Christ, and Christianity, though she has her own idiosyncratic, neo-Freudian interpretation. I have developed a model of spirituality from studying her oeuvre. Spirituality can't be defined, only hinted at, suggested, and partly held. Spirituality is holding water by letting it flow through your fingers. I argue for a dynamic interplay, an inter-connection or perichoresis[4] between themes with language, love, alterity (Otherness), and transcendence each requiring the other. We form words and structure grammar because there is someone else to speak with. We can relate outside ourselves because we have the ability to transcend the ego. We can be open and trust relationships because of the human ability to love. We ask questions with our words because we are human, and thus the circle starts again – language, love, alterity, and transcendence.

Kristeva stands within what is commonly called postmodernism. A key tenet is that we live within language and cannot step outside it in our experience. This is to reject logocentrism, the idea that logic, reason, and language are independent from human thought and experience. Jacques Derrida famously stated that "there is nothing outside the text." Yet, this does not mean that we make everything up like so many fantasises. We respond to life, what I describe as "encounters through interpretation." Metaphysics should not be rejected outright as a form of thought, for it can live as reactive story, a necessary artifice, for we respond to life in certain ways that make us ask these questions and tell these stories. Avoidance of logocentrism can be understood as a form of apophatic theology in the Christian tradition, as in the mystics and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which states: "Because he may well be loved, but not thought. By love he can be caught and held, but by thinking never."[5]

An immediate corollary is that when the UK educational organisation, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education), states that spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education should inform the whole school curriculum, the whole of SMSC should be considered as spirituality understood in the sense that I derive from studying Kristeva. Ofsted understands "spiritual" only as interiority with its feelings and questions which can include religion but are in themselves neutral and human. If spirituality involves the dynamism of language and the ability to trust (love) the Other, transcending our egos, experiencing nature, or creating art, then the whole of SMSC is thereby "spirituality." Ethics cannot be siphoned off, or the social and the cultural put on parallel tracks. They are an organic, human whole.

Photo: Thom Milkovic

3 Notre Dame de Pontmain.

4 *Perichoresis* was the term used by some of the Church Fathers for the mutual indwelling of the Holy Trinity in an eternal, round dance of love.

5 *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*. Translated by A. C. Spearing. (London: Penguin Random House, 2001), 27.

Be in Touch: To Wonder, to Feel, to Share

I am too out of touch to write professionally for schools now, and though publishing some of these ideas in academic journals,[6] I have begun to self-publish material on Amazon free of charge.[7] My dynamic model has evolved into a simpler, more accessible scheme of the Be in Touch project that I am building, though this is in its infancy.

- **Be:** questions of meaning and existence ("to Wonder")
- **In:** the inner life and wellbeing ("to Feel")
- **Touch:** relationships with others ("to Share")

Spirituality involves all of these in a delicate tapestry.

So far, I have produced a little book of mindfulness upon the request of a teacher friend for her year 12/13 students.[8] It is concerned mainly with IN, but a section encourages involvement in exercises with others. There is a mention, albeit brief, of transcendence as we are more than biology and psychology. That is left as an open question. Imagination is promoted as creative, and creativity as a spiritual gift, as it were. Thus, there is Guided Fantasy ("Mindjourneying") and the use of koans ("Mindflipping"). The latter are considered as particularly useful during an exam when the mind goes blank, or the student struggles to make sense of a question – eyes closed, ten slow breaths, flip. The students devise their own koans (or "flips") and sit with these for several seconds, then open eyes, think afresh. The flip switches the brain from discursive to non-discursive thought.

At the time of writing, I have planned a scheme to explore spirituality with health care workers (at all levels) that can be run between three or six sessions in an imaginative, interactive, and accessible way.[9] I will eventually produce a booklet to help facilitate this. A guide for teachers will also follow that opens up the concept of spirituality across the whole of SMSC and reveals how it is more than just the religious. Obviously, with my background, education is important. Health care touches me because of my pastoral ministry and my own illness. In the shadows can life be found, and what we need most is often just a touch of love. How very Christlike!

Kevin O'Donnell is an author, a priest of the diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and an auxiliary chaplain at the Basilica of Notre Dame de Pontmain in France.

6 Kevin O'Donnell, "Spirituality as Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education (SMSC). Using Julia Kristeva to Rethink a Spirituality of Education," *JRS* 71 (2023): 109-122, doi.org/10.1007/s40839-023-00199-9; "'Be in Touch' – A Kristevan Model of Spirituality in Health Care Education," *LJRHS* 24, 2 (2024): 15-43.

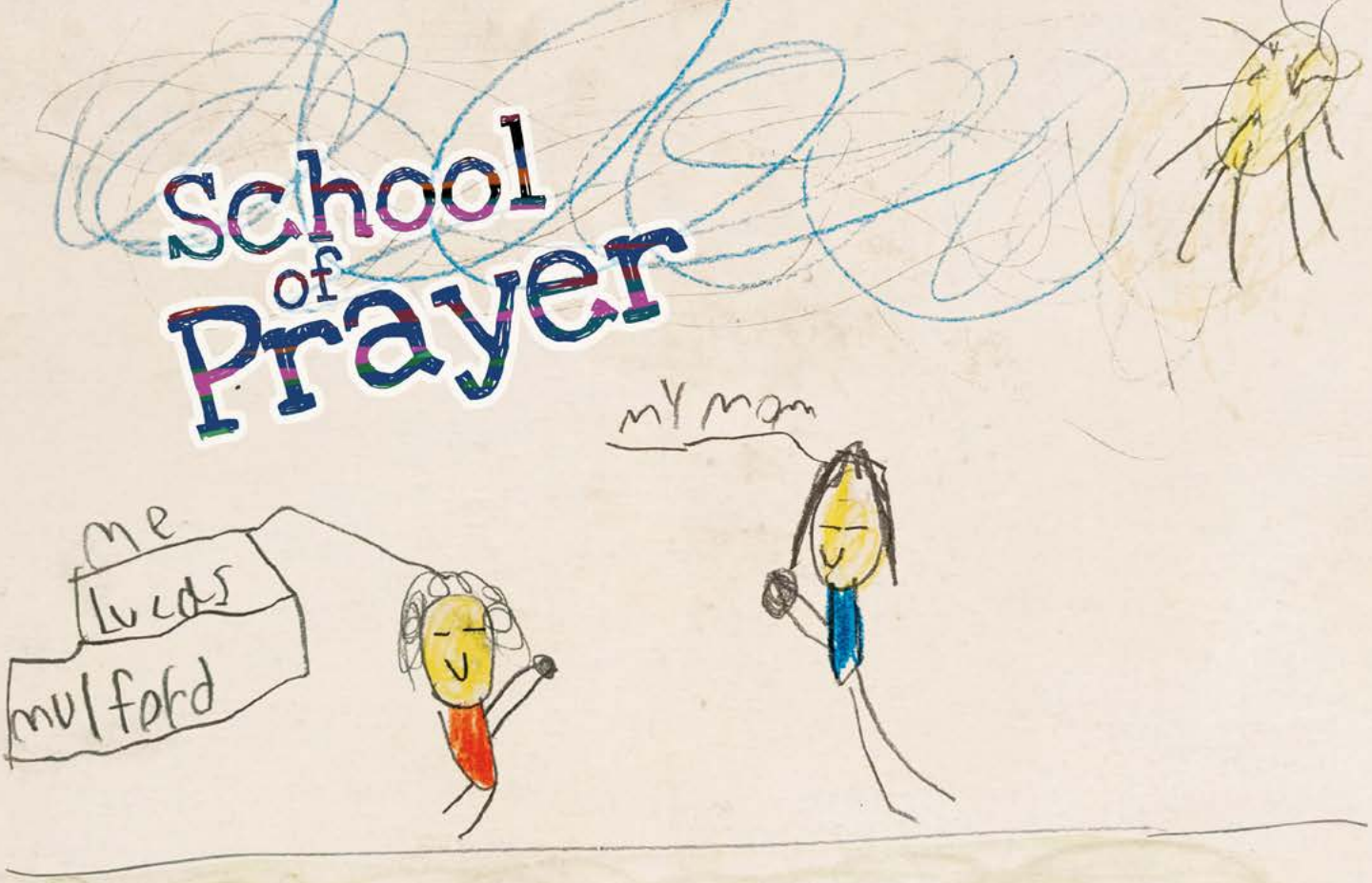
7 Amazon prints a copy if ordered. I am only using this platform as I do not have the finances otherwise. I am just putting things out there and giving some people hard copies. To really launch the Be in Touch project properly, funding and distribution would need to be provided.

8 *Be in Touch: Mindfulness*. There are three formats of magazine size, large paperback, and small paperback, published by Amazon.

9 The outline has been published in O'Donnell, "'Be in Touch' – A Kristevan Model of Spirituality in Health Care Education," *LJRHS* 24, 4, compilation 1.0 (2024).

Photo: Nigel Hoare

School of Prayer



LAUREN MULFORD

When I was in first grade at St. Theresa's Catholic School, I loved hearing about Jesus' love for children. I was a distracted kid and often felt lost. I felt unloved in life, but I found God's love at Mass. I wanted to show God my love too, so I tried to memorize the Stations of the Cross. Luckily, God doesn't measure our love in memorizing the Stations because I still don't know them thirty years later. Catholic school was where I first felt God's love and realized I loved him back. So even though my husband and I haven't been active in the Catholic Church, we decided to enroll our children in our town's Catholic school.

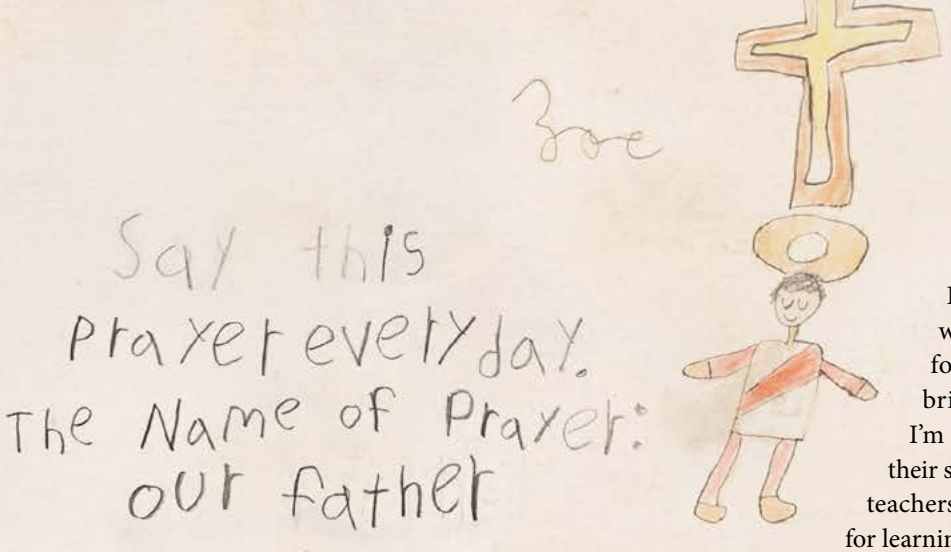
Today after school, my first-grader, Lucas, wrapped me in a blanket and told me I was blessed. He was pretending the blanket was Mary's special one, the one she wrapped baby Jesus in. He said he wanted me to be wrapped in Mary's love too. It was a heartwarming moment.

My third-grader, Zoë, brought home a list of prayers her class is learning this year. She loves to pray. She rarely misses a night in my room to say the Our Father and ask for sweet dreams and a good day at school. I love that she has extra prayers for when she needs them. Her anxiety from her public school days has faded.

My kindergartner, Saoirse, brought home an art project where she painted her palm yellow and each finger a different color. Each finger had a corresponding note instructing her in the 5 Finger Prayer they learned that day. I overheard her in the car instructing her younger sister, Junia, how to pray for God's blessing in her life.

My children's teachers pray with them and for them. They teach them how to pray. While I hope my children have felt God's love since infancy, now they have even more adults showing them God's love. My children have more safe adults they can turn to when life is tough – adults who actively teach them about God's love, Christ's sacrifice, and the Spirit's empowerment.

My two oldest boys, Caleb and Micah, are in a combined 8th and 7th grade class. I'm no longer worried about them being bullied. They're bringing home top marks because they can focus without anxiety from the other students. My oldest daughter, Holly, is in a combined 6th and 5th grade class. Her classmates often call her a sweetheart, and she is. She's able to do her work without distractions from petty teachers who think the worst about students.



I have many sad stories from the days my children were in public school. The peace that has come into our household since leaving those schools has been profound. However, while it might seem like I'm making an argument for one schooling system over another, what I've noticed from my time as a teacher (in public and private schools and as the president of my county's homeschool association) is that educational method doesn't matter as much as parental involvement.

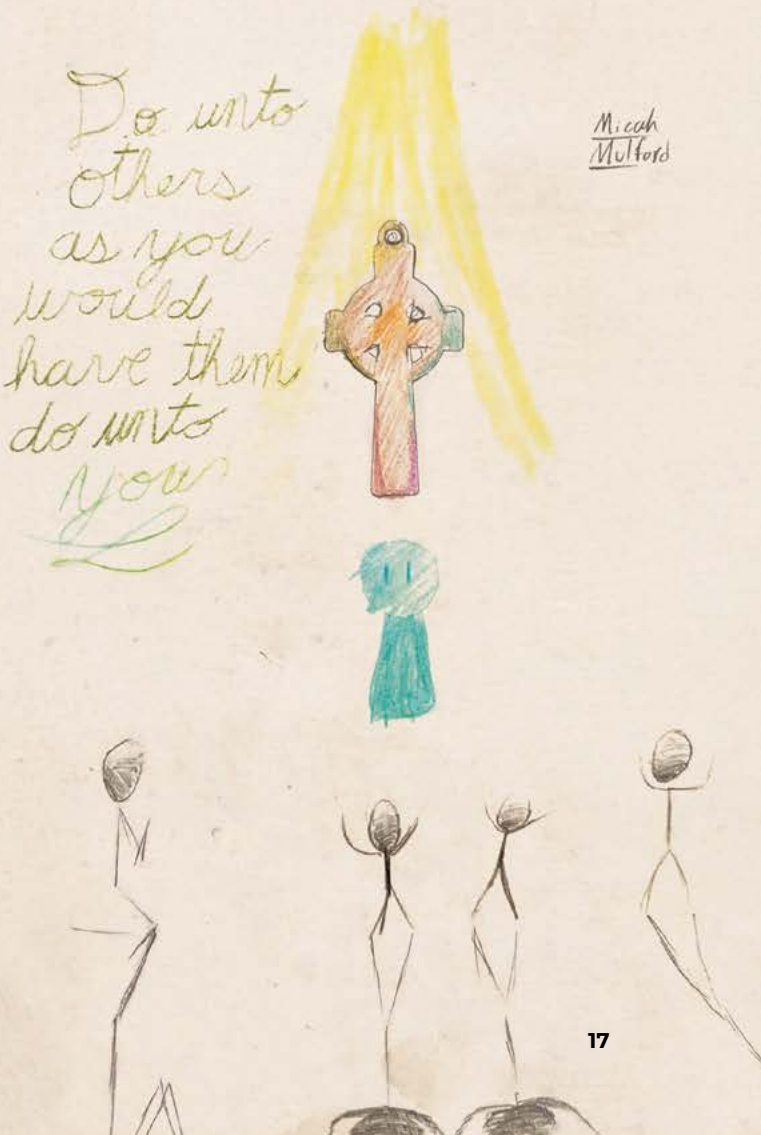
I've seen successful adults from all three systems, and I've seen failed adults from all three. More than just being involved, success blossoms from seeds of love, from the established love the parent has for their child that the child feels. A well-loved child flourishes. A parent who is involved but not controlling, who establishes love and patience with their child, and who provides a safety network that isn't codependency, does more for their child than the best schooling can.

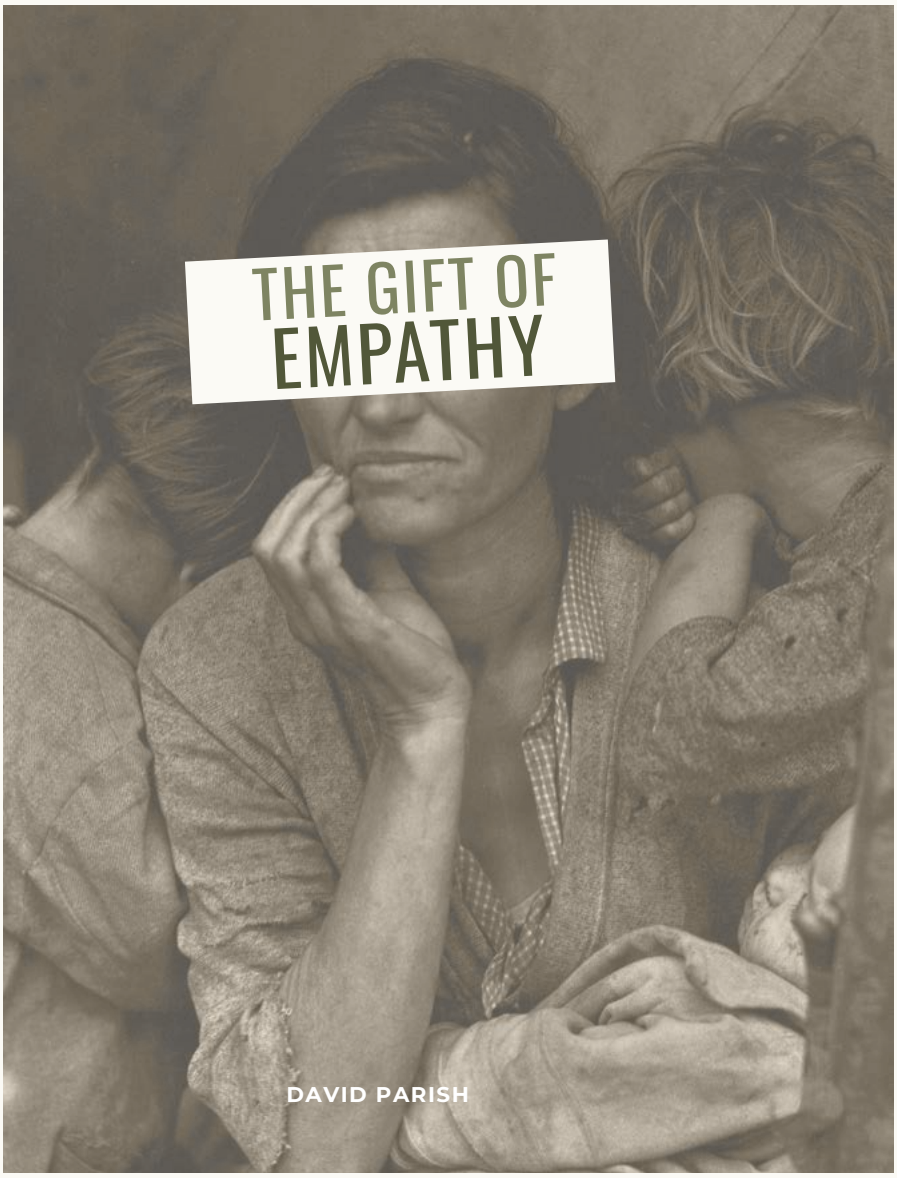
How can we as a community ensure that every child is well-loved? We can never replace the love of a parent but many students are starved for any love. Not everyone has access to a private school as affordable and love-filled as ours. I'd like to see more churches engage their communities by offering (ideally) free private schools. It would require many congregants to step up and be willing to sacrifice their comfort for the betterment of others. Perhaps your church can start an after-school programme where congregants can offer free homework help and dinner. I'll ask my children to pray that the Spirit engages our imaginations!

If you find yourself trying to discern where to place your child for school, let me offer these helpful points. Know that you can change at any point of the school year, for North American schools. There are free resources online. You will always be doing better than someone else and not as well as another. Be ready to disappoint someone. Keep your children safe and find a good support system. Sit with your child as often as possible and let them tell you what they want to tell you. Ask them every day if they were kind to someone. Surprise them with special lunches or donuts for the class. Everyday I send my kids off to school with the Levitical blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26; it brings them peace. Whenever I'm able, I purposefully drive past their school and pray for them, their teachers, their classmates, for safety, for learning, for peace.

You don't have to do everything the way we do it. You may look at our routine and feel like we are lacking or you may feel like you are too far behind to ever catch up. The Lord is with you. What works for my family may not work for yours. Don't give up on your child. Keep trying new things if the old things aren't working. And in everything, pray. Teach your children to pray. Pray together. As James says, the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Lauren Mulford is a seminary student at Union Theological College. She is married with eight children. She works for the Kirby Laing Centre as the PhD Administrator. She leads Sunday evening workshops at her church and is an ecumenical delight!





THE GIFT OF EMPATHY

DAVID PARISH

Photo: Dorothea Lange

The We of collective living in small communities has become the fragmented lonely I of the present day.

We live in an age where empathy is in short supply. In 2017 a Cambridge University student was filmed burning a £20 note in front of a homeless man, and other homeless people sleeping on the street have been attacked or had cold water poured on their sleeping bags. Even our political rhetoric has returned to the Victorian discussion of the deserving and undeserving poor and even more strident has been the debate over Illegal asylum seekers.

Why this loss of empathy? Jonathan Sacks, both an academic and then Chief Rabbi, writes in his book *Morality* how from the Tudor era (1485-1603) to today the We of collective living in small communities has become the fragmented lonely I of the present day.

A few years ago, I wrote an article about a group of Tudor merchants including Humphrey Monmouth who were key supporters and funders of William Tyndale (1494-1536) in his efforts to have a Bible in English. What struck me was that they were part of a guild called the Worshipful Company of Drapers dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Everything from trade to church life was about the we of communal activity and not about them as individuals. They lived in homes of which the lower and ground floors were the shop, and the family lived in the upper floors. Their workers often lived in accommodation above the adjacent yard or in smaller houses close by.

The main change came with mechanisation and the subdivision of labour, with home and work now very different places often geographically separate. Slowly the sense of community and belonging diminished and the sense of responsibility for those with less wealth was lost. The question is, how can we regain something of that sense of community and connection? How do we find a sense of empathy for others at the margins of society or who have fled persecution?

The word empathy comes from the Greek *empatheia*, and is commonly attributed to Aristotle who used the word in his essay "On Dreams," though more in the sense of a common experience of fear. Although in common use at the time the New Testament letters were written, none of the writers of the letters to the churches uses it or addresses it directly. Yet clearly it is a concept that appears by example or analogy throughout scripture.

The word first appears in English usage as a translation for the German term *Einfühlung*, used by philosopher, poet and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), a remarkable thinker in the areas of theology and psychology. Stiff in manner, he disliked social events and was probably on the Autistic spectrum. *Einfühlung* is one

of those wonderful German words that has a soulishness about it. It combines the idea of feeling deeply about something or someone and entering into that experience by trying to imagine living it.

Empathy helps build bridges and breaks down misunderstanding and it appears to be a foundational human emotion. David Krzesni writes, "the human desire for justice (as a consequence of empathy) is not rooted in an egoistic self-interest or logical understanding of reciprocity, but is an involuntary component of our genetic makeup."[1] However, is it just our genes since anger and hatred can equally be part of the genetic makeup or is there something deeper in our fundamental spiritual being that drives compassion and care?

God through creation and his merciful response to the sin of Adam and Eve, and through the history of Israel culminating in the death and resurrection of Christ, has sought to enter into the human sphere to show us that even in our fallen state we are the object of his love and compassion and empathy. The question is how do we embrace this compassion and respond in turn with compassion and empathy to others?

German and American theologians of the post war period coined the word *Heilsgeschichte* or the history of salvation, told through the story and history of God's people in the Old and New Testaments. It's in describing emotion that story is at its most powerful because through the stories of others we can identify our own story.

In the story of the fall perhaps the most compassionate and empathic phrase ever uttered is spoken by God: "Adam where are you?" An artist friend once sent me a woodcut of this moment. Adam half hidden by the undergrowth of the garden looks up fearfully as the words are spoken over him. Adam knew he had sinned and worse had blamed everyone but himself. Most of all he blames God – "the woman you gave me caused me to sin" was his worst excuse.

We all know the moment when what we have done wrong comes back to haunt us. As the Prayer Book so wonderfully puts it, "sins of omission and commission." Sins large and small. Sometimes they come back many years after the offense. Many recent news stories refer to "historic abuse." Acts committed way back in someone's life somehow are discovered and the consequences have to be faced.

The consequence for Adam and Eve was loss of an open relationship of walking with God face to face and banishment from Paradise and yet there is that promise that God is still with them and that one day through another "Adam" the relationship will be restored. The story of Noah shows that the faithfulness and trust of one man in God is enough to ensure that God will not destroy the humanity he has created. Again through Moses, a flawed personality in many ways, comes salvation from slavery in Egypt and restoration to a land of promise.

These stories exist not only on the national level but also on the personal. One of the most moving paintings of Jean-François Millet is his painting of Ruth and Boaz. Ruth has returned from Moab with her mother-in-law Naomi to her home town of Bethlehem. They were the poorest of the poor. Landless, widowed and with no close family to support them. Ruth hopes to glean in the fields of their nearest relative Boaz. As women gleaned in the vicinity of the male farm workers there was always a risk of harm. However in this picture Millet captures the tenderness and empathy of Boaz. He is pictured with a protective arm barely touching Ruth's shoulder and telling

1 David Krzesni, "Empathy," *Counterpoints* 503 (2015): 33-54.

Jean-François Millet, *Harvesters Resting (Ruth and Boaz)*

his men to look after her. Of course, as we know empathy and compassion eventually turn into love and Ruth and Boaz become part of the ancestry of King David and Jesus.

However Scripture never flinches from portraying a lack of compassion and in the story of King David we find at various points he fails to consider the impact of his actions on others, as in his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. This eventually leads to the deliberate harm of her husband to hide David's guilt. This lack of empathy is also found in the New Testament and there is almost a dark humour in the way that days before the crucifixion where Jesus is already aware of the coming pain of the cross, Mark, Matthew and Luke include the story of the disciples arguing over who will have the top roles in the coming kingdom. One account has James and John bidding directly for the top jobs and Mathew gives the detail that it was their mother arguing on their behalf. What parent doesn't want the best for their children?

Henri-Gustave Jossot, *The Wave* (1874)

Empathy occurs where you least expect it. Luke says that Pilate "desired to release Jesus", but in the end fear overcomes compassion. The fear of the title of "not Caesar's friend" thrown at him by powerful and well-connected Jewish leaders finally is too strong and Jesus is betrayed. Contemporary tradition holds that from that point on Pilate's career declined and he was sent into exile by Nero for the rest of his life in an isolated town in what was then the remoteness of the Swiss alps.

In Acts Peter faced by a beggar at the temple doors looks on him with empathy and says quite simply, "we don't have money to give you but we do have healing in Jesus name." Radically transforming compassion. This theme continues in the letters to the churches. Paul's injunction to the Galatians, who were believers from a Celtic pagan background of indifference and acceptance of suffering is quite clear: "do good to all". The message James conveys in his letter is that believers, through the church, are to minister to mind, soul and body. Finally in Revelation we find the cumulation of the acts of salvation history as the heavenly city becomes a place of security without tears or sorrow for the people of God. The question is how does the overarching biblical story of grace and compassion become part of our story? How do we in our context reach out to the "least and the lost"?

I am a trustee of a charity that provides housing for refugees as they settle in England. Most have a story of fleeing persecution and war and as you listen to their accounts and try to imagine the fear and the strain and sense of loss of family and country you begin to enter into that experience. It's entering into their story which enables you to empathise and want to respond.

Last year I did a survey of ten local evangelical churches in South West London across several denominations. Everyone had at least one ministry to those on the margins of society. They operated foodbanks, operated community cafes and offered "drop ins" and meals and a chance for connection for the lonely and isolated. The larger churches had several activities and one had a significant ministry to refugees from Ukraine and Hong Kong.

All these activities represent thousands of hours of volunteer effort which if evaluated at the minimum wage rate represent a significant economic benefit to those communities as well as contributing to local wellbeing. Also, these churches report that some of their most active members came into fellowship through a first contact at those ministries. Often they have testimonies of God restoring relationships and making damaged lives whole again.

David Parish is a former airline manager who is now involved in several community ministries and acts as an advisor to charities. He is an Associate Fellow of KLC.

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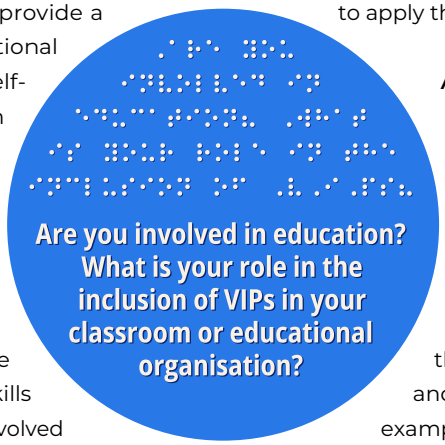
Route to (Digital) Inclusion of VIPs in Education

HENK SNETSELAAR

Successful inclusion is an accumulation of critical success factors

For most, getting an education is a matter of registering for a course, paying the fees and being present at lessons. For students who are visually impaired, the so-called VIPs, there can be many obstacles. Is the registering system accessible for a student who uses an electronic Braille device to read what is on the screen? Are all course materials and resources made in accordance with the accessibility guidelines for digital information? Are all teachers able and willing to provide a visually impaired student with additional explanations of concepts that are self-evident to sighted students? Inclusion needs the successful implementation of several critical success factors.



The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a comparative study involving more than 80 countries. It tests the mathematics, reading and science skills of 15-year-old students. In 2018 I was involved in a multinational research project led by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, USA, which investigated the feasibility of including individuals with visual and other disabilities in PISA. The final result of the study was that it was *not* feasible to develop a PISA test accessible to students with disabilities in the five countries participating in our study, given the assistive technologies available to them.

Assistive technologies, skills and an accessible learning environment

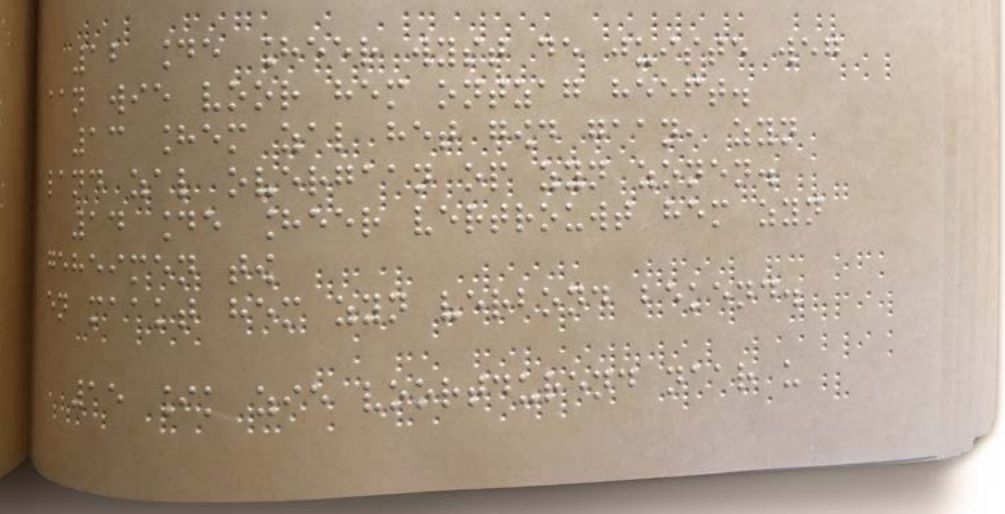
To successfully complete a course as a visually impaired student you need at least three things: (1) adequate assistive technologies; (2) the skills to use your assistive technologies well; and (3) a learning environment in which teachers and fellow students welcome you and accept that adjustments might need to be made to teaching style and materials to accommodate you.

In order to take in information, many visually impaired people need an assistive device to provide the learning materials, most of the time from a computer screen, in a way that it is perceivable, operable and understandable. Depending on the student's impairment and learning style, information must be enlarged, converted into Braille, or read in synthetic speech. This means that the visually impaired student also needs better-than-average IT skills to apply the features of assistive technology.

Accessible learning environment

An education involves the processing of a lot of textual information, both administratively and in terms of course content and examinations. International accessibility guidelines have been established to assist in the creation of educational material that is inclusive of students with visual and other impairments. Here are some examples of the guidelines for accessibility of digital information.

There are four foundational principles for accessibility: digital information should be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. For the blind student, "perceivable" means that any graphics, such as photos, graphs and images, are provided with a text alternative, and any text can be converted into Braille and speech. Since blind people cannot use the computer mouse, "operable" means, among other things, that everything can be operated with the computer keyboard. "Understandable" means that the language level and the reading order of the information across the entire page are clear and correct. "Robust" ensures that the display of the information on the computer screen is compatible with the assistive technologies for people with disabilities. (You can see all 13 accessibility guidelines and 78 testable success criteria at www.w3.org/WAI/.)



Braille print of Psalm 25:12-15 in Dutch.

In the journey of faith we are all learners and we need an intimate relationship with the great Teacher as stated in Psalm 25:12. "Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose."

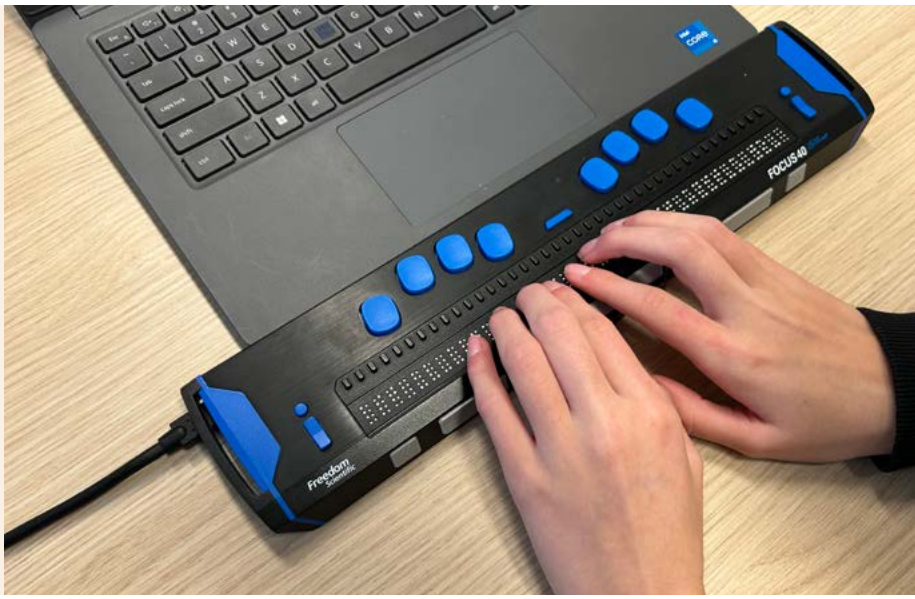
However, an accessible learning environment means more than just having the right technology and computer skills in place. Education should also be "socially accessible." Student-teacher and student-peer relationships make all the difference. Despite legislation in an increasing number of countries to ensure that education is accessible to students with disabilities, there are still schools where blind students are rejected or otherwise prevented from receiving an inclusive, enjoyable education.

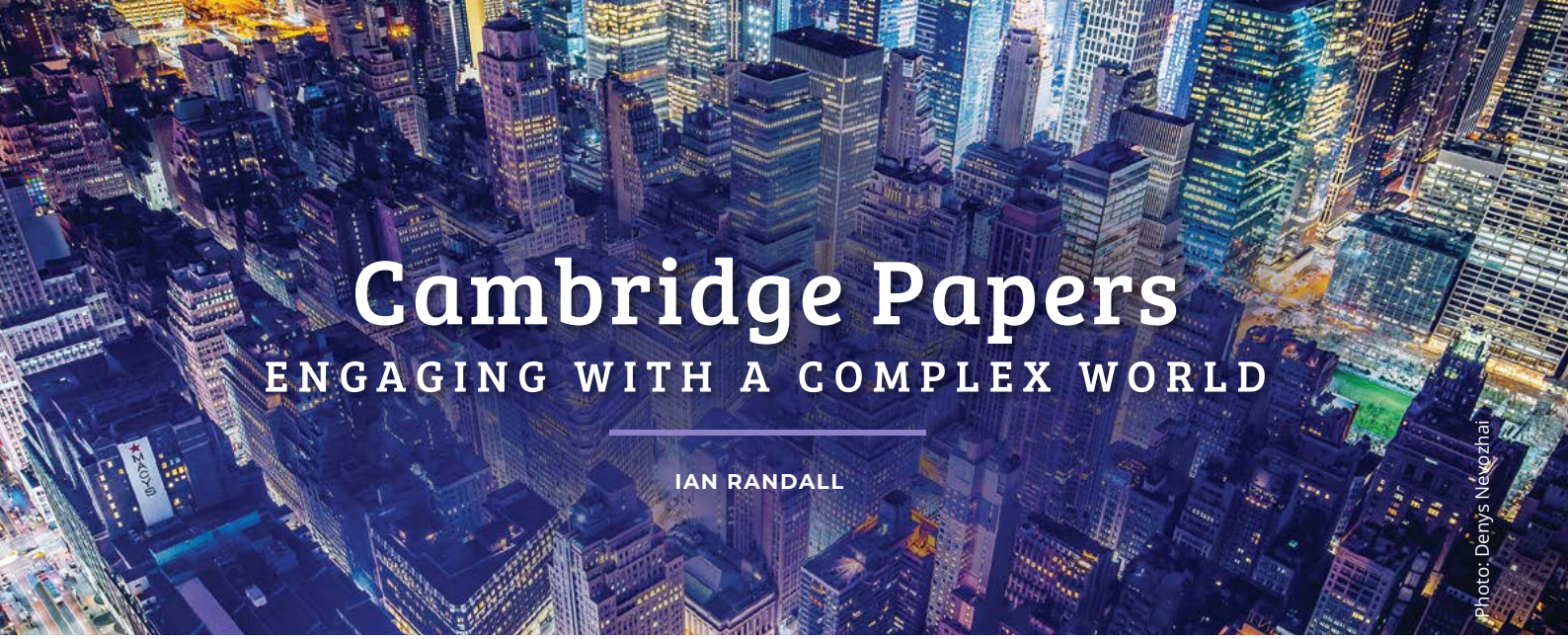
Fruitful education requires a good relationship, based on trust, between teacher and student. This applies to all students, but even more so to students with disabilities. For a good relationship with a visually impaired student, you need a lot of empathy as a teacher. How does a blind student study? What can the blind student do with a Braille display device? How can I explain visual concepts? What works and what doesn't when it comes to processing study material? How much extra time is needed to complete a paper or exam? At a special school for blind students this is all built into the curriculum, but if you study in mainstream education this can be difficult. Once a student came to me and said that he wanted to leave his mainstream school because the teacher accused him of pretending that his Braille display did not work well during his test. The teacher had no idea how his assistive technology works or what happens if it is not working as it should, and yet insisted that the student was using it as an excuse. Another student once changed to another subject because her fellow students did not want to work with her in a group assignment. One of the reasons why, as a blind student, you cannot successfully study in a mainstream educational setting is the unfamiliarity of teachers and students with a student with a disability.

An inclusive study environment for students with disabilities is an accumulation of many factors. It requires well-developed and maintained assistive technologies, accessible digital study materials, and a school management that supports them with good policy and resources. Perhaps above all it demands the exercise of a teacher's love for their subject and the student, and peers who will make room for those who are so easily excluded.

Henk Snetselaar worked for forty years in a school for blind students in the Netherlands, teaching IT and assistive technology and coaching blind students in the use of personal IT equipment in mainstream education.

Braille consists of a pattern of 6 or 8 tactile dots on a smooth surface. The pattern of the dots determines the character that is displayed. A Braille display is a device that converts and displays the text from the computer screen in refreshable Braille for a blind person, most of the time 40 characters at a time. By navigating the focus around the screen, they can read all displayed text. In addition to Braille, synthetic speech output can also be used to support the reading process of a blind person. Partially sighted people can use the combination of enlarged characters and images on the computer screen and synthetic speech output in order to work with digital information.





Cambridge Papers

ENGAGING WITH A COMPLEX WORLD

IAN RANDALL

Photo: Denys Nevozhai

Ian Randall gives an account of the history of the Cambridge Papers and its key contributors.

It was in the context of discussions within a group in Cambridge about a "Christian Mind" that a Cambridge Papers Writing Group was formed. An influence on the discussions was the book *Issues Facing Christians Today*, by John Stott, first published in 1984.[1] The first two Papers were published in 1992 and throughout the 1990s and beyond, typically four were published each year. In 2000 a collection of Papers was published under the title *Christianity in a Changing World: Biblical Insight on Contemporary Issues*. Tribute was paid in the "Acknowledgements" to Roy Clements, who had been the pastor of Eden Baptist Church in Cambridge, "who contributed so much to our discussions and to these Papers over the first ten years of our meetings". Among those commending this volume were Elizabeth Catherwood, who wrote that the Papers were "sometimes provocative, always stimulating, invariably worth reading", and John Stott, who spoke of the "consistently high standard of Christian reflection on contemporary issues" of the Papers. Professor Brian Heap, Master of St Edmund's College and a distinguished biological scientist, recommended the Papers "to all those interested in applying Christian principles to contemporary social, political, economic and scientific issues".[2]

The venue for the early meetings of the Group was the home in Cambridge of Michael Schluter, an economist with a PhD from Cornell University, USA, who argued in his writing and speaking that many social, economic and political problems were caused by a lack of attention to personal, organisational, national and international relationships.[3] Schluter had known Roy Clements when they were in East Africa. In Cambridge, Schluter set up the Jubilee Centre, to explore current issues, and for over two decades the Centre published the Papers and covered the costs. Distribution of the printed Papers was on a wide scale.[4] As well as stimulating discussion, Schluter was widely involved, for example, in low-profile peace conferences in South Africa from 1987 to 1997. Although a significant proportion of those who wrote the early Cambridge Papers were in Baptist churches, notably Eden Baptist, the group was from different denominations. There was also a breadth of interests and academic backgrounds.

One theme ongoing in discussions and papers was possible ways in which reflection on the experience of Israel in the Old Testament might contribute to the area of social ethics. Given this emphasis, it is not surprising that few of the papers had to do with the nature of the church as seen in the New Testament, a topic that has been crucial for Baptists. Indeed, in *Christianity in a Changing World* in 2000 the only paper dealing directly with the church was by Julian Rivers, on "Disestablishment and the Church of England", in which he offered a clear analysis of different models of church and state and suggested that there was a continuing coherent case for the Established Church.[5] Rivers, an Anglican, was a member of the Eden congregation while an undergraduate and Master's student in Cambridge. He became a Lecturer in law and subsequently Professor of Jurisprudence in the University of Bristol.[6]

1 John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1984). Reprints followed.

2 Michael Schluter and the Cambridge Papers Group, *Christianity in a Changing World* (London: Marshall Pickering, 2000), inside cover.

3 See Michael Schluter and David Lee, *The R Factor* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

4 For the history of the Jubilee Centre, see https://www.jubilee-centre.org/our-history.

5 Julian Rivers, "Disestablishment and the Church of England," in *Christianity in a Changing World*, 63-80.

6 Julian Rivers to Ian Randall, 23 May 2023.

The areas of Christian thought dealt with in the first decade of the Papers were: human identity and sexuality; Christianity and society; crime and justice; economics and finance; science and medicine; history and providence; and postmodernism and culture. Schluter wrote on "Relationism," "Roots," "Should Christians support the Euro?", and "The Rise and Fall of Nations." As well as his work on disestablishment, Rivers wrote on "Blasphemy Law in the Secular State." Among the other contributors to the volume in 2000 were Michael Ovey, later a Research Fellow and then Principal of Oak Hill Theological College, London. He wrote on "The Human Identity Crisis," "Women, Men and the Nature of God" and "Deconstruction." Another Anglican was Christopher Townsend, who worked for the Jubilee Centre and became a solicitor. He wrote on "Homosexuality," "The Morality of Punishment" and "Hell: A Disputed Doctrine." Ranald Macaulay, who planted two Presbyterian congregations and led Christian Heritage for apologetics and outreach at the Round Church, Cambridge, wrote on "The Great Commissions." Some who contributed at an early stage moved on, for example Peter Walker, who wrote on "Jerusalem." He became a Lecturer at Wycliffe College, Oxford. One Baptist contributor, Mark Dever, wrote on "Reflections on Providence." He had been associate pastor at Eden, and undertook a PhD on the Puritan, Richard Sibbes, then became pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington DC.[7]

Among those who continued to contribute regularly, in addition to Schluter and Rivers, was Paul Mills, a researcher at the Jubilee Centre for a year, who after completing a PhD in economics in Cambridge was in policy roles at the Treasury. In the 2000 volume he wrote on "The Biblical Ban on Interest," "Christianity and Financial Security," "Investing as a Christian" and "A Brief Theology of Time." From the Treasury he joined the International Monetary Fund as a senior adviser on matters such as innovative risk transfer, climate change and financial markets, and Islamic finance.[8] Another ongoing contributor was Denis Alexander, a member of Eden, who at the time of the 2000 volume was heading the Molecular Immunology Programme at the Babraham Institute, Cambridge. He was later co-founder and first Director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion. Part of his commitment was to showing that the biblical accounts of creation were fully compatible with evolution. The subjects of his early papers were "Science: Friend or Foe?", "Genetic Engineering," and "Can Science Explain Everything?"[9]

> "The intention of the Papers was always to be on the lookout for current issues of importance and to bring Christian thought to bear."

John Coffey, who studied history and then completed a PhD in Cambridge, was in an informal group of graduate students that met to listen to a speaker and discuss ideas.[10] He moved to the University of Leicester, as a Lecturer and later Professor of History.

From 2000 onwards, it was increasingly the case that Papers written by guest contributors were being published, and the Writing Group morphed into an editorial group of about eight people. Papers since 2000 are available on the Cambridge Papers website and thus their readership expanded considerably.[11] In the period from 2000 to the present, the number of writers has expanded. At the same time, Eden connections have remained strong, illustrating the influence of a local church. Amy Donovan, who became part of Eden when an undergraduate, went on to undertake a PhD and further research and became a Lecturer, a Fellow of Girton College, and then Professor in the Department of Geography in the University of Cambridge. She brought to the Papers her expertise and experience in environmental hazards, volcanology, political geology, and social aspects of risk – which formed the subject of one of her Papers, in 2016.[12]

Association with Eden also featured in the editorial group, which was typically composed of eight people. In addition to those who went back to the early days of the Writing Group, two newer members of the editorial group were part of Eden: Caroline Eade, who having read theology at the University of Cambridge, went on to become Head of Charities at Edward Connor Solicitors, a law firm and a Christian charity; and Margaret Wilson, who was a Lecturer in Art History at the Universities of Southampton, Oxford and Cambridge. A further addition to the editorial team was Christopher Watkin, who having completed a PhD and lectured in Cambridge, moved to Monash University, Australia.[13]

The intention of the Papers was always to be on the lookout for

7 His thesis was published as: *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 2004).

8 Among Mills' writings was – with John Presley – *Islamic Finance: Theory and Practice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

9 For a widely-read book by Denis R. Alexander: *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2008).

10 John Coffey to Ian Randall, email, 9 May 2023. Coffey's thesis was published as: *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).

11 See https://www.cambridgepapers.org/.

12 See further, Adam Bobbette and Amy Donovan, eds., *Political Geology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). I am indebted to a conversation with Amy Donovan, 14 April 2023.

13 For an example of his writing: *Jacques Derrida* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Press, 2017).

current issues of importance and to bring Christian thought to bear. The categories under which the Papers were grouped expanded from seven to ten: arts and popular culture; economy and business; education; environment; family and sexual ethics; local church and community; politics and government; science and technology; welfare; and worldview and ideologies. Paul Mills wrote on such subjects as globalisation and the world economy (2005), the financial crisis (2011), and Brexit (2017). Often thinking in the Papers issued in a subsequent book, with Schluter and Mills producing, for example, *After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships*.[14] Denis Alexander wrote regularly, with his "Genes, Determinism and God" (2014), which had been the subject of his Gifford Lectures in St Andrew's University in 2012, being developed and in 2017 published as a major book by Cambridge University Press.[15]

Discussion of "law and religion" – and specifically a Christian contribution – was led by Julian Rivers.[16] Among several Papers he wrote was one on three basic types of arguments that have a proper place as Christians engage in public life: arguments from the common good, from institutional independence, and from conscientious witness.[17] Another lawyer who from 2004 onwards wrote several Papers was a leading barrister, David McIlroy, a Baptist. He completed a PhD through Spurgeon's College in 2008, on "A Trinitarian Theology of Law."[18] A regular contributor on historically-related issues was John Coffey, for instance on "The Myth of Secular Tolerance" (2003) and "To Release the Oppressed: Reclaiming a Biblical Theology of Liberation" (2009). Again, substantial publications followed, such as *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution* (2006), looking at religion and intellectual change in seventeenth-century England, and a book on "deliverance politics," from John Calvin to Martin Luther King Jr. (2013).[19]

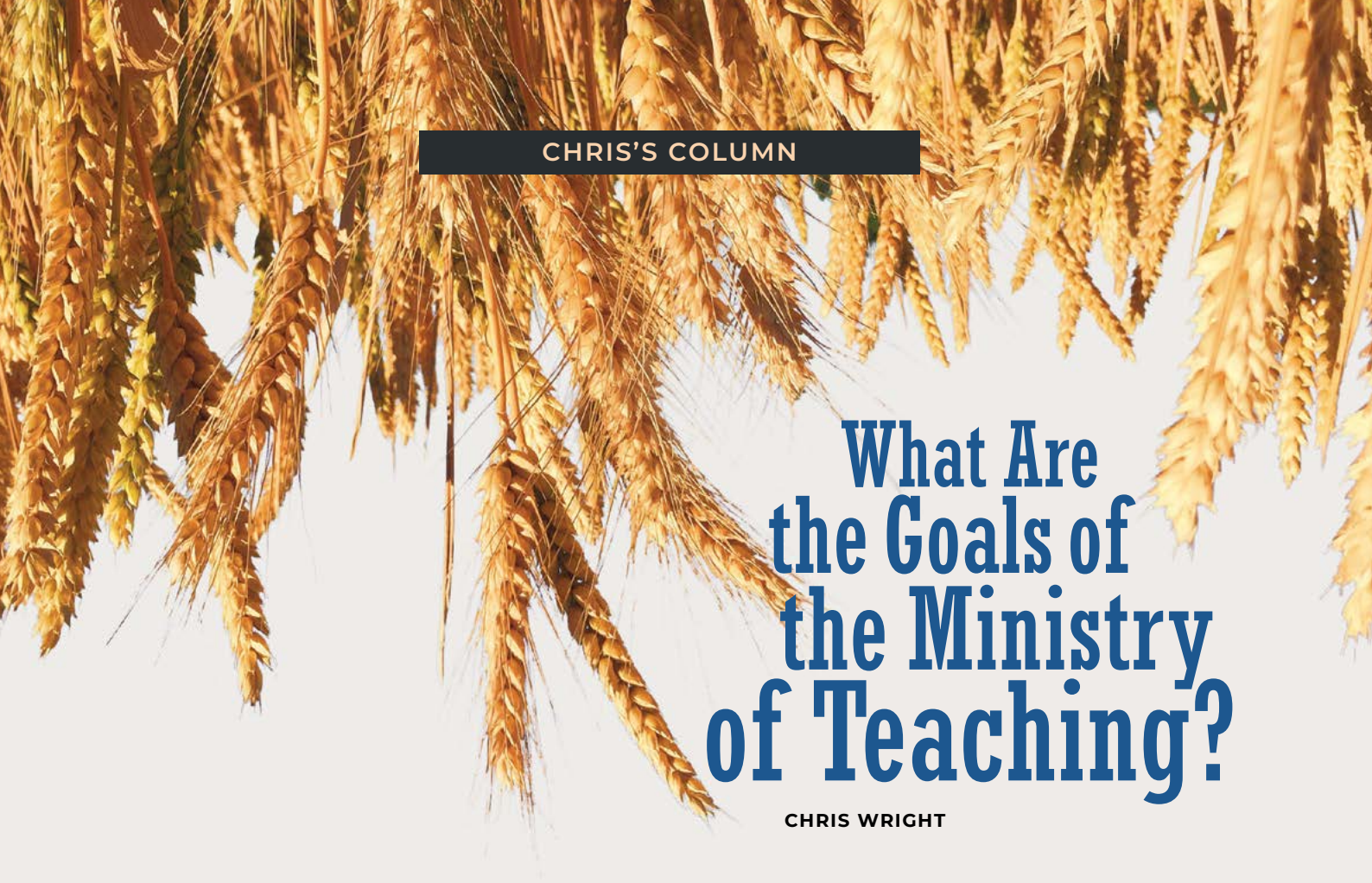
The senior pastor at Eden following after Roy Clements was Julian Hardyman, who had been associate pastor. He sought to continue to develop the "Christian Mind," with his first book being *Glory Days* (2006), republished in extended form as *Maximum Life* (2009).[20] Hardyman preached a series of sermons from biblical passages that could encourage a view that reclaimed all of life for God's glory: work, leisure and culture, as well as evangelism. *Maximum Life*, with its subtitle *All for the Glory of God*, was subsequently used as the basis for UCCF seminars.[21] There was renewed encouragement to develop a "Christian Mind," which had been the initial vision that led to the Cambridge Papers.

Ian Randall is a Senior Research Fellow of the Kirby Laing Centre. He has written extensively on evangelical history, especially in relation to spirituality, community and mission.

14 Paul Mills and Michael Schluter, *After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre, 2012).
15 Denis Alexander, *Genes, Determinism and God* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017).
16 See, in this context, his "Theology and Legal Education" in Oliver D. Crisp, Gavin D'Costa, Mervyn Davies, and Peter Hampson, eds., *Christianity and the Disciplines* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2012). Also, his "The Secularisation of the British Constitution" *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2012): 371-399.
17 Julian Rivers, "Three Principles for Christian Citizens," *Cambridge Papers* (2009).
18 His thesis was published as: *A Trinitarian Theology of Law: In Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann, Oliver O'Donovan and Thomas Aquinas* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).
19 John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008); *Exodus and Liberation: Deliverance Politics from John Calvin to Martin Luther King Jr*. (Oxford: OUP, 2013).
20 Julian Hardyman, *Maximum Life: All for the Glory of God* (Nottingham: IVP, 2009).
21 I am indebted to a meeting with Julian Hardyman, 8 March 2023.

Photo: Getty

Joy at Dawn **BRENDA ROSSOUW** *BA Fine Art Ed., Stellenbosch University*



CHRIS'S COLUMN

What Are the Goals of the Ministry of Teaching?

CHRIS WRIGHT

The Bible affirms from very early on that God's people need teaching and that God's people are vulnerable when teachers are absent, false or unfaithful. But what are the ultimate goals of such teaching? What results should we want to achieve through the ministry of teaching?

In answer, I suggest three biblical outcomes of teaching:

1 Mission: In a World of Many Nations, the Abrahamic Outcome

In Genesis 18, we read, "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen 18:18–19).

In a world going the way of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20–21; 19; Isa 1:9–23; Ezek 16:49–50), God wanted to create a community that would be different – not just religiously different, but *morally and socially distinctive* (committed to righteousness and justice). That is the reason God chose and called Abraham and commissioned him to teach his own household and descendants.

But then, *why* did God want such a community to exist in the world? God reminds us of his own purpose in verse 18. It was in order to fulfil God's promise to Abraham that through him and his descendants, *all nations on earth would find blessing*. That is God's ultimate purpose.

There is, then, a *universal and missional context* here to the teaching mandate given to Abraham. Already, however, the *ethical* content of the law ("keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just") is anticipated in the kind of teaching that Abraham was to give to his household after him. Abraham was to teach his people not only *about* God but also about the ethical character of God and how God wants people to *live*. In other words, this is missionally focused ethical teaching to shape a people through whom God can fulfil his mission among the nations. This in itself shows that teaching is never merely the imparting of knowledge but includes the *shaping of character and behaviour*.

So, the *ethical purpose* of teaching in Old Testament Israel is governed by *the missional purpose* behind Israel's existence in the first place. In the midst of the nations, *this* nation is to be *taught* how to live as the redeemed people of God, ultimately for the sake of the nations and as part of the mission of God for the nations.

2 Monotheism: In a World of Many Gods, the Mosaic Outcome

There is a strong emphasis on teaching in Deuteronomy. God's word (the knowledge of God's mighty acts and God's law) must be *constantly taught to the people*. Moses

himself is repeatedly presented in the book as the one who teaches Israel the requirements of their covenant God, and the primary content of Moses' teaching was that YHWH the God of Israel was *the one and only, unique and universal God, beside whom there is no other* (4:35, 39). For that reason, the first and greatest commandment is to love that one whole single God with your one whole single self – with heart and soul and strength (6:4–5).

And that primary love command is immediately followed by *the necessity of teaching* – teaching that is to apply to the personal realm (hands and foreheads), the family realm (the doorposts of the home), and the public arena (the gate) (6:4–9).

Such teaching was necessary because of the polytheistic culture that surrounded the Israelites. Idolatry is the greatest threat to biblical mission, for God's people cannot bear witness to the true and living God if they are obsessed with the worship of the gods of the cultures around them (whether in Old Testament Israel or in today's church).

So, the whole of Deuteronomy 4 is a sustained challenge to *avoid idolatry*, and the emphasis on *teaching* within the chapter is strong and repeated. The way to avoid idolatry is to pay attention to the teaching, and the purpose of the teaching is to keep future generations from idolatry.

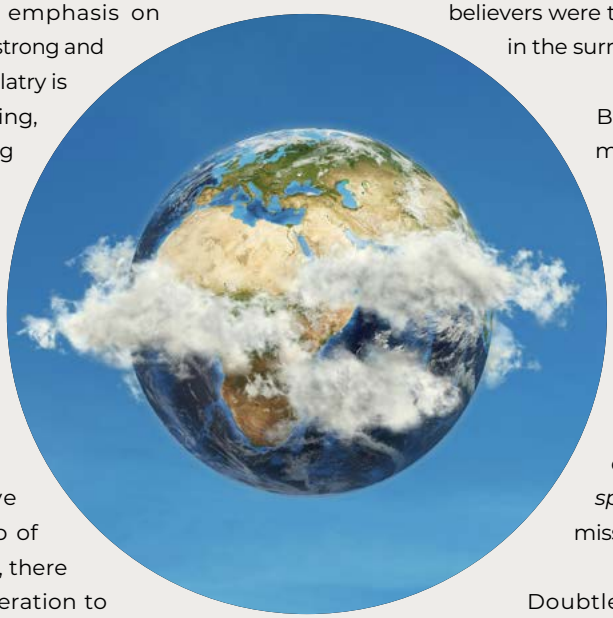


Photo: Getty

If Israel was to be true to their mission among the nations, in such a way that the nations would ultimately come to worship the one true living God, then they, Israel, must preserve the knowledge and worship of YHWH alone. For that reason, there must be *teaching* from generation to generation of all that the God of Israel had *done* and all that the God of Israel had *said*. Teaching was essential to preserving their monotheistic stewardship, the knowledge of God that God had entrusted to Israel. The "theological education" of Israel had the missional intention of preserving their monotheistic faith for the sake of the nations who had yet to come to know this truth about the living God.

3 Maturity: In a World of Many Falsehoods, the Pauline Outcome

The kind of church growth Paul prayed for was *growth in maturity*. Here's how Paul described the kind of qualitative church growth he prayed for in his churches:

> We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience. (Colossians 1:9–11)

In those few verses, Paul prays for three kinds of maturity:

- **Knowledge of God's story** (verse 9) – his will and purpose.
- **Life lived by God's standards** (verse 10) – their moral choices and behaviour.
- **Proof of God's strength** (verse 11) – their spiritual commitment to Christ and perseverance in spite of suffering.

So, for Paul, these were the measure of growth in maturity, and all of them would be necessary if the believers were to participate in God's mission in the surrounding pagan culture.

But how will such Christian maturity be attained? Not surprisingly, through sound teaching by those whom Christ has gifted to the church. In Ephesians, for example, he affirms that the teaching ministry in the church is *a Christ-ordained gifting* with the goal of equipping God's own people for *spiritual maturity* and effective mission in the world (Eph 4:11–16).

Doubtless some young graduates come out of seminary thinking they are God's gift to the church. Yet, they are not so much the gifted ones as *the given ones*. God has not given *to* them all the gifts to do all *the* ministry themselves; rather God has given *them* as people (with their particular gifts) *to equip others for their ministry*. So, the job of pastor-teachers is not an end in itself, but a *servant* ministry that has learned how to train disciples to *be* disciples in every context in which they live and move. People don't come to church to support the pastor in his or her ministry. It is precisely the other way around. The pastor comes to church every Sunday to support *the church in its ministry*, which is out there in the world.

Are we teaching future pastors to think like that? Do we give them the missional task of training others for ministry and mission? Do we encourage and equip them to shape their preaching and teaching and pastoral ministry for that goal? Do institutions of theological education see it as their role to train future pastors to be *equippers*?

To summarize, God has ordained that there should be teachers and teaching among the people of God so that:

- God's people as a whole should be a community fit for participation in *God's own mission* to bring blessing to the nations (the Abrahamic goal).
- God's people as a whole should remain committed to *the one true God* revealed in the Bible, and resist all the surrounding idolatries of their cultures (the Mosaic goal).
- God's people as a whole should *grow to maturity* in the understanding, the obedience and the endurance of faith, and in effective mission in the world (the Pauline goal).

The preaching and teaching ministry of our churches should therefore exhibit these same emphases:

- **Committed to mission** in all its multiple biblical dimensions, eager to participate with God in his mission.
- **Faithful to biblical monotheism**, totally committed to the God of the Bible alone and able to discern and resist the false gods that surround us (including consumerism, ethnocentrism, etc.).
- **Mature in understanding, ethics, and perseverance**, able to encourage members to take care of their lives and their doctrine and to build up others through godly example and steady biblical teaching.

Are we aiming to produce people who are *biblically mission-minded, biblically monotheistic and biblically mature*?

If that is our aim, then one necessary component of achieving it will be to bring the Bible back to its central place both in the regular teaching and preaching ministry of local churches and in the world of theological education in seminaries.

Chris Wright is the Global Ambassador of the Langham Partnership (www.langham.org) and a Senior Research Fellow of the KLC. This article is an abbreviated version of "The Missional Nature and Role of Theological Education," published in Evangelical Scholarship, Retrospects and Prospects: Essays in Honor of Stanley N. Gundry *(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).*

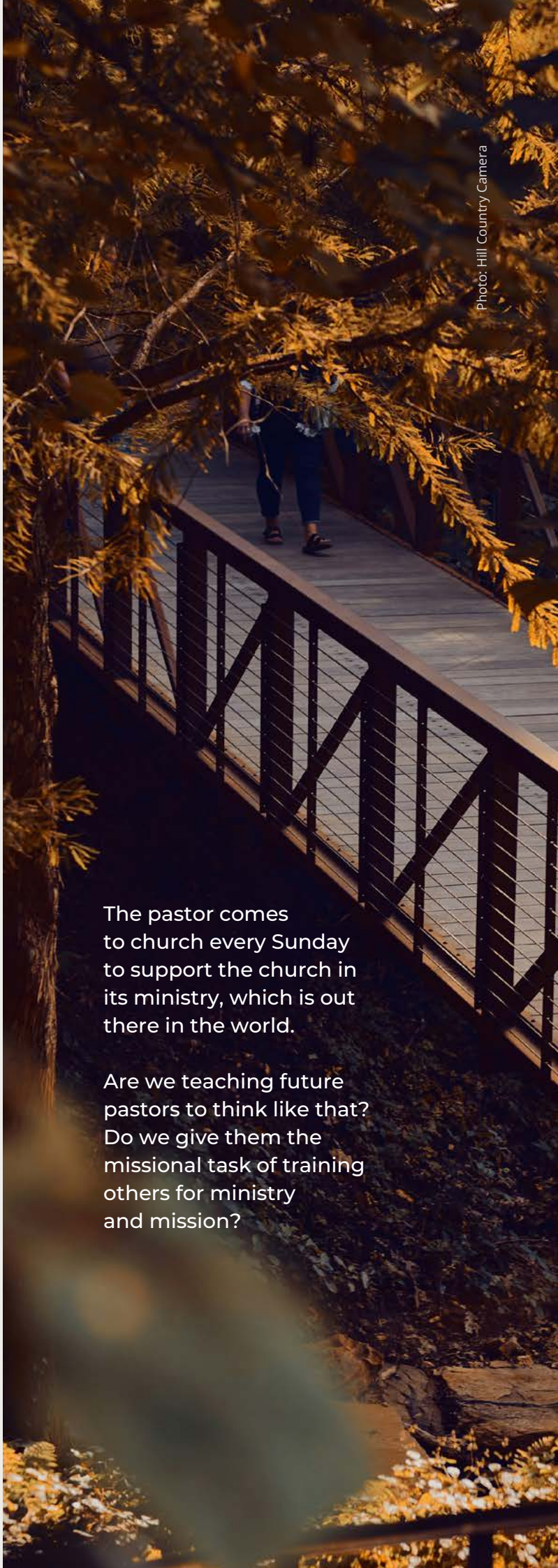


Photo: Hill Country Camera

The pastor comes to church every Sunday to support the church in its ministry, which is out there in the world.

Are we teaching future pastors to think like that? Do we give them the missional task of training others for ministry and mission?

Francesco Fracanzano, *Abraham About to Sacrifice Isaac*

Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac:

An Introduction

CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW

One way the New Testament alerts us to the significance of Jesus is in its description of him as "the son of Abraham." We read about Abraham in Genesis 12–25. After the promises to Abraham, we have the long chapters of Genesis 12–50 dealing with the low points and heights of the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Why? Having received the promise, Abraham and his descendants had to be formed to become like the promise, worthy representatives of God among the nations. Nowhere do we see this more clearly and radically than in Genesis 22, known in Judaism as the *Akedah* or "binding" of Isaac.

Only in Abraham's old age did his wife Sarah bear their son Isaac, a supreme lesson in trust and faith. "Isaac" means "one who laughs," an allusion to Sarah's laugh of unbelief (Gen 18:12–14) and then later to her laugh of joy (Gen 21:6–7). However, if waiting for an heir was a test, a far greater one was to follow. In Genesis 22 God tests Abraham by instructing him to take Isaac and to sacrifice him as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah.

God's instructions evoke the intimacy of Abraham's relationship with his son: "your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love", but there is far more than this love to the test. Isaac is Abraham and Sarah's only son born in their old age and the *only* means through which the promise of descendants could be fulfilled. In order to be formed to become like the promise he carries, Abraham has to be willing to sacrifice the promise itself. Little wonder that Kierkegaard writes, "Venerable Father Abraham! Second father of the human race! ... you needed a hundred years to get a son of your old age contrary to expectation ... you had to draw the knife before you kept Isaac; ... in a hundred and thirty years you got no further than faith."[1]

Genesis 22 is a type of Jesus. Abraham as a father and the bearer of the promise is called to sacrifice his son but this is a test and a ram is provided as a substitute. The Father sends his son, the Christ, into the far country in order that we might come home. Jesus, unlike Isaac, goes willingly and consciously to the cross, with "sorrow before him" (see below), actually sacrificing himself on our behalf in order that we too might become bearers of the promise.

As profound historical narrative, Genesis 22 has attracted considerable literary and artistic attention. In his opening to *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard introduces a man whose "longing was to accompany them [Abraham and Isaac] on the three day journey when Abraham rode with sorrow before him and Isaac by his side."[2] This is followed by four creative, alternative readings of the story of Genesis 22. Such literary musings help us access the searing heart of the story. Our Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar recognised from the outset the role of art in interpretation, and commissioned artworks by the South African sculptor Gert Swart and the artist Zak Benjamin for the covers of the books. In the years since, art and biblical interpretation has become a major area of research, as has *visio divina*. Marleen has long engaged in this sort of work and we welcome her thoughtful and creative reflections on a number of artworks related to Genesis 22.

1 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 19-20.
2 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 7.

Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac: A Narrative in Pictures

MARLEEN HENGELAAR-ROOKMAAKER

First read the story as it is told in Genesis 22:1–19 in the translation of your choice.

From *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493), detail

In this medieval woodcut all the different elements from the story of the sacrifice of Isaac are reproduced. Abraham is carrying the fire and the knife, while Isaac carries a bundle of wood on his back. Together they are on their way to the place of sacrifice. In the detail shown above, Isaac sits ready in kneeling position, with hands lifted in fright. Abraham lifts his knife, but it is held back by the angel. We see that the angel is pointing with his other hand. To what is he pointing? To the ram behind Abraham.

This is the story of Genesis 22 in a nutshell. Yet it is only the outside of the story, because we see in this woodcut only a very limited representation of the dramatic emotions that must have been evoked by all of this. It is precisely these emotions that artists of later centuries attempted to capture. It is a story with three principal characters: Abraham, whose name means father of many nations; his son Isaac – "your only son whom you love so much," the biblical text tells us – and God. The story revolves around their mutual relationships as well as the promise that Abraham will have many descendants. The whole reason for this impossible task is that God is testing Abraham, says the text. Is Abraham able to abandon himself completely to God and trust him perfectly? Even to the point of being prepared to take the life of his son? And Isaac? Is he willing to obey, can he trust that his father and God intend the best for him?

We will go through the story by way of a series of pictures that together tell the story. It is fascinating to discover that each artwork approaches the story in a somewhat different way with a unique emphasis.

We start with a painting by Chagall.[1] We see Abraham and Isaac on the road to the place of sacrifice. The painting zooms in on what occupies them. What a multitude of thoughts must have gone through their minds! It is as if Abraham is trying to keep himself from seeing Isaac who is walking beside him. He tries to concentrate completely on God and his promises. Apart from the knife he holds a candle — the fire — but as a candle it is also a sign of light and hope, even more so as it is put in close contrast to the knife. Isaac is naked, totally vulnerable and struggling under the burden he carries. He makes a self-protecting gesture with his arms. They walk on, full of emotions and thoughts that strive for precedence.

Marc Chagall, *Abraham et Isaac en route vers le lieu du Sacrifice* (c.1931), detail

1 Certain images are unavailable for reproduction due to copyright restrictions. In such cases, small details have been included in compliance with fair-use guidelines for editorial purposes.

Jan Victors, *Abraham and Isaac Before the Sacrifice* (1642)

This painting by Jan Victors shows Abraham and Isaac before the sacrificial offering — as the title of the work states. Abraham has not yet built the altar.

We see Isaac bracing himself; his questioning hand is in the centre of the painting. “Where is the lamb?” Abraham looks him lovingly in the eyes and reassures his son’s left hand. He puts his other hand protectively on his shoulder. “Don’t be afraid, God will provide a sacrificial lamb,” he says. He continues to trust. But Isaac also chooses to trust. He does not attack his father, nor does he run away. What a heart-rending scene!

In this painting by Nicolaes Maes, Abraham has built an altar in a dark and dramatic mountain landscape. He is pulling out his knife. Isaac lies naked on the altar, with a loincloth and ribs showing. What does this remind us of? Precisely, of paintings of the crucifixion. Nicolaes Maes makes the connection with Jesus, the NT sacrificial lamb. The story of the sacrifice of Isaac thus was seen as a foreshadowing of the crucifixion. God himself will provide a lamb by means of his own son. The artist has put Isaac in a position that reminds us of the crucifixion (although turned around), with a bright light on the victim. Or is Isaac himself the source of light?

Nicolaes Maes, *Abraham’s Sacrifice* (1653-1655)

Then an angel flies from behind a dark cloud that emphasises God’s majesty, his hand ready to stop Abraham. But this hand could also be blessing Abraham.

Govert Flinck, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (c.1635)

Govert Flinck shows more or less the same moment but with a different emphasis. The angel is here a little bit closer to Abraham than in the previous painting. Abraham drops the knife from his hand in fright and holds his other hand protectively in front of his eyes against the light. Isaac also turns his face away from the overwhelming light. The angel looks lovingly at Abraham. The accent here lies on God’s luminous majesty which appears from behind a thick cloud.

Jan Lievens, *The Angel Prevents Abraham from Sacrificing Isaac* (c.1640), detail

This large painting by Jan Lievens also shows the moment when the angel stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. I especially want to draw your attention to Isaac, pictured here somewhat younger. As a little child he stretches out his hands in desperation towards the angel, welcoming him with both hands. What a drama!

The angel points upwards with his right hand: it is God who brings salvation. With his left hand he points to the ram that is caught in the bushes: that is how God will rescue Isaac. The ram was seen as a foreshadowing of the lamb that was to be slain. Since antiquity, the fact that his head is tangled in the bushes has been seen as pointing to the crown of thorns.

Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (1635)

What does Rembrandt make of this scene? He makes light fall on each of the three protagonists, so that each is clearly represented. Using the vertical canvas Rembrandt links the three figures together via the arc of Abraham's arms. The movement in the painting is upwards, the movement zigzags from Isaac's feet via Abraham and the angel to the angel's arm that points up to God who, though behind the scenes, is in this way awarded the leading part in the drama. The falling knife, the murder weapon not now needed, breaks through the upward climbing movement.

Isaac is here full of fear, tension, and resistance. However, here also, the light falls particularly on him, on the sacrificial victim and thus also on the future victim to which he points. Abraham keeps his hand on Isaac's face, so that the boy does not need to see all that is happening. At the same time Abraham does not need to look into his eyes.

The angel stops him precisely at the decisive moment. Rembrandt does not only let the angel speak from heaven, as in the Bible, but he bodily restrains Abraham by grasping his arm.

"Abraham, Abraham," the angel calls out.

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

The angel looks at Isaac, he is his first concern, as if he is already looking ahead to the future offering.

Abraham looks up to the angel – it is the moment when he realises that Isaac is saved. His face is full of emotion. Do you see the tears on his cheeks? He is crying with relief and joy!

Both on account of composition as well as psychological depth, Rembrandt surpasses his colleagues.

Caravaggio, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (1603)

Caravaggio shows in yet another way that Isaac is a prefiguration of Jesus and his sacrificial death. He also lets the angel grasp Abraham's wrist to stop him in the nick of time. He looks and points with his other hand to the ram that in turn points ahead to the *Agnus Dei*, the lamb of God. Notice how Isaac's face and that of the ram have been positioned next to each other: the OT sacrifice next to the NT sacrifice. Although Caravaggio was a great artist, the master of *clair-obscur* and in this an instructor for Rembrandt, this work strikes me as far less dramatic than that by Rembrandt. As far as emotions are concerned, the suffering of Isaac is most emphasised here.

This painting by Jan Lievens shows the moment after the sacrifice, the moment after Abraham has killed the ram. We see it lying on the left, bleeding, with the bloodstain next to it. Abraham and Isaac are pictured kneeling, as Abraham had told his servants that they "would worship there and afterwards return." (In the Dutch Bible the word is "knielen" meaning to kneel, a synonym for "worship.") Both look up and listen to the angel of the Lord who speaks to them: "Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore."

Jan Lievens, *Abraham Offers the Ram Instead of Isaac, God Renews his Promise to Abraham* (c.1638)

Though God is hidden from view in all of these paintings, we can also discern a close connection between Abraham the father and God the Father in this story: Abraham as a foreshadowing of God the Father. Both must sacrifice their son and although it breaks their heart, they both press on and go through with it. Abraham is given grace at the very last moment, but God does it in actuality; he himself provides the sacrificial lamb, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, his only Son.

Abraham has passed the test. He has listened to God and trusted "that he would provide." Isaac was allowed to live; God does not ask the impossible from us. Thereupon God renewed his promise that he will bless Abraham with countless descendants.

Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker founded ArtWay and is editor-in-chief of the Dutch ArtWay. She edited the complete works of her father (art historian Hans Rookmaaker) and has written about popular music, liturgy, and the visual arts. In 2019 she was co-curator of Art Stations of the Cross in Amsterdam. Her latest book is The Artistic Sphere: The Arts in Neo-Calvinist Perspective *(IVP Academic, 2024), which she co-edited with Roger D. Henderson.*

LORD GIVE ME grace

Lord give me grace
for ordinary days
Help me to appreciate
the routine of life
The rush and bustle
of getting ready for work
Children's noise and chatter
over breakfast

Give me grace at work
when the boss is irritable
When colleagues fail to see
the brilliance of my ideas
Remind me to give you thanks
when things go well
To be conscious of your Spirit
when decisions have to be made

Let me seek you
in the everyday life,
to hear your voice
When problems
crowd my mind
give me your thoughts
Make real the words
"take from my life
the strain and stress"
Forgive me when my life
does not "confess the
beauty of your peace"
Lord of the Ordinary
we give you thanks

DAVID PARISH

Becoming educated

In his *Lessons of the Masters*, George Steiner writes, "Authentic teaching is a vocation. It is a calling. … The dangers correspond to the exultation. … Bad teaching is, almost literally murderous and, metaphorically, a sin."[1] Much about education is only learnt through the actual experience of educating. In this article we have invited colleagues who are passionate about education to share some of their hard-won insights about how to help students become educated.

Finding Your Voice and Loving the Question

CRAIG BARTHOLOMEW

Imparting information is a very important part of education, but a student can learn many facts and know the views of their lecturers without ever having learnt to think for themselves, i.e., without becoming educated. Søren Kierkegaard, one of my favourite philosophers, gets at this with his provocative statement "Truth is subjectivity." Kierkegaard did not mean that there was no such thing as objective truth, but he meant that for truth to matter it has to be personally appropriated. How do we teach so as to get students on this sort of educational journey?

First, we need to help students *to find their voices*. Teaching undergraduates I often found that I had excellent female students in my classes, but they hardly said a word. Thus, I developed the practice from day one of a first-year undergraduate class of helping students to find their voice by learning some things about their neighbour and then telling the class about that person. On this basis I would seek to nurture a context of dialogue.

Second, we need to teach students *to ask questions*. Teaching is contextual and if we do not know what questions our students are asking then our teaching will never land in their midst. At the outset such questions can be anything the student wants to ask, however basic. Over time students need to learn to ask the questions that will open up a topic for exploration. Susanne Langer wrote: "a philosophy is characterized more by the *formulation* of its problems than by its solution of them. Its answers establish an edifice of facts; but its questions make the frame in which its picture of facts is plotted. They make more than the frame; they give the angle of perspective, the palette, the style in which the picture is drawn – everything except the subject. In our questions lie our *principles of analysis*, and our answers may express whatever those principles are able to yield."[2] We want our students to learn to ask questions that will open up the truth about the subject under investigation. Hence, my philosophy of education in a nutshell is, *Love the Question*!

Craig Bartholomew is Director of KLC.

1 https://archive.org/details/lessons-of-the-masters-by-steiner-george/page/n17/mode/2up

2 Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (New York: NAL, 1948), 2.

Teaching in Light of Telos and Bearing with Weakness

SARA OSBORNE

For many years, I have organized course schedules by noting objectives that need to be covered and working backwards to allot appropriate time for each required learning task. However, my planning must consider more than concepts and assignments to cover by the end of each semester; I must prioritize the *telos* of the entire educational endeavor which teacher and student pursue together. If education is indeed *formation*, the goal of the time I spend with my students is to move them closer toward the image of Christ which they were created to display – even in a writing or biology or economics class. When I teach my Composition students how to write an academic essay, I am doing more than simply helping them create a product which will facilitate academic and professional dialogue; I am offering them an experience of Christian discipleship as they wrestle with humility and dependence (pre-writing), empathy and compassion (writing/editing), hospitality and faith (revision/submission). Pointing this out to them, both in word and deed, has been transformative – both in their thinking and in their character. The end goal of education is not a product, but a person.

Remembering the humanity of my students (and myself) has shaped my teaching in profound ways. As a professor, mother, and teacher/tutor of a child with special learning challenges, I regularly bump up against *weakness* – both my students' and my own. While we are somewhat conditioned to run from the ideas of *weakness, inability* or *disability*, the Lord has graciously shown me that weakness is part of what it means to be human; disability in various degrees, intervals, and places in time will one day find us all, should we live long enough. To teach in light of this truth is to grow in patience, kindness, perseverance, compassion, and hope – to embrace Christian charity. This charity may be manifest through altered pace, modified assignments or different modes of assessment, all of which require flexibility and creativity on my part. But these practices have the power to demonstrate to my students that I am not surprised by their weakness (or my own) and that we all have valuable gifts to offer the church and the world. The title of J. I. Packer's little book *Weakness is the Way* often plays in my mind as I consider the tasks of teaching and learning. While we do pursue excellence and strive to run with endurance, we must do so remembering the presence and purpose of our weakness: that the glory of God might be displayed (John 9; 2 Cor 12:9).

Sara Osborne is Assistant Professor of English and Director of Classical Education at the College of the Ozarks. She is also an Associate Fellow of KLC.

Photo: Getty

"Those who can, do; those who can't, teach."

JORDAN PICKERING

Not being one for the stage, especially not in 1905, I can't say what role this line played in George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, but in my life, the words, "Those who can't do, teach" occasionally pop into my head to make me angry. As anyone who has sat under a variety of teachers could tell you, being able to do or not do makes little difference to whether one can teach.

Aristotle – perhaps writing in response to Shaw; I haven't looked into it – said, "Those who know, do. Those who *understand*, teach." This gets at some of what makes a good teacher: it suggests that there are different ways to command information. But there's more to it than that.

Teaching is Design and Design is Empathy

One of the more common comprehension tests for young children is the giving of directions: can they clearly describe the route from one place to another? What one discovers from such a test is that the essence of teaching – giving directions – is not something that everyone finds easy.

One of graphic design's masterpieces was also a wayfinding problem. Harry Beck's London Underground map[1] is a landmark of design because it recognised one crucial thing. Being underground, it makes no difference whether the map accurately reflects London's geography. Accuracy was, in fact, an *obstacle* to understanding. His map, freed from all the noise of real-world London, shows users only what they need to know. The only measure of success is whether the average traveller *gets there*.

Teaching too is a kind of map-making. Teaching facilitates a journey – especially for students who are, at first, lost. Giving people directions requires that one understands *where they are* and not just where they need to be. Thus, good design and good teaching both start in the other's shoes. They start with *empathy*.

Bad teachers invariably show disregard for their audience, often in favour of their own ego. Good teachers reduce themselves to the size and level of their hearer (which is why primary-school teaching is not easier just because the material is easier!), and they create pathways to understanding that were invisible from where their students were sitting.

When I taught biblical studies to first years, our new students, especially those for whom English was a second language, generally misunderstood what we were looking for in their work. They thought their assignments were meant to showcase the best ideas on a topic or the "right answer." So, being anxious about their own lack of competence, they would mine books for clever-sounding paragraphs that they'd string together into a stylistically challenged and barely coherent essay. What we were actually looking for was evidence that a student could *engage* a topic theologically and *evaluate* the discussions going on in their sources – things that are hindered by "right answers" and reverence for quotable quotes. They thought I wanted to hear the best voices on a topic; I wanted them to *find theirs*. Having put on the first-year student's shoes, an obvious piece of route design occurred to me. Since depending on quotes had become a splintered reed that pierced the hand of anyone who lent on it, my first-year assignment simply banned students from using direct quotes.

Teaching is not a retreat for relative incompetents, and it is not merely about possessing understanding. It's about empathising with the lost and, by care and creativity, designing maps for them by which they might be found.

Jordan Pickering is Director of Media at KLC and an Associate Fellow.

1 https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/culture-and-heritage/art-and-design/harry-becks-tube-map

Learning from Latin American Pedagogy

HUGO HERFST

The educator's challenge to move from the accumulation of information – as indispensable as that may be – to a relevant, contextualized application through a process of critical thinking or discernment, may be addressed through a simple three question formula adapted from Latin American pedagogy.

In Spanish, the three key words are *ver* (see), *juzgar* (judge or discern), and *hacer* (do). In my teaching experience, both at a university level as well as in pastoral settings of catechetical instruction or Bible studies, I find that the opportunity to summarize the lesson by highlighting one or two key insights, articulating the importance of these ideas and then considering how what has been learned could be applied, offers a fruitful educational paradigm. The questions I pose are:

> ***What?*** What did you learn?
>
> ***So what?*** Why is this important? Why does it matter?
>
> ***Now what?*** What difference could this make in your life, academic studies, community, family, ministry, etc.?

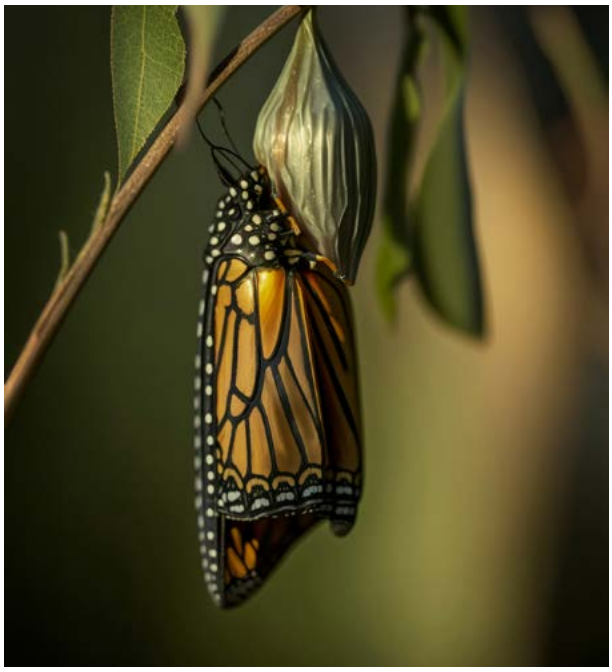


Photo: Allec Gomes

Photo: Raphael Nogueira

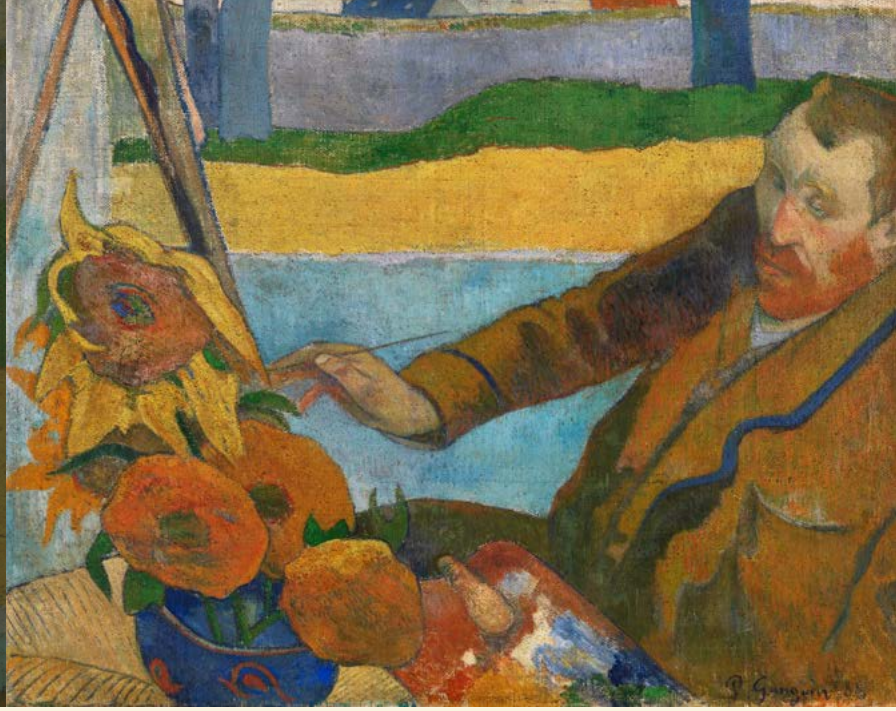
The application will vary depending on the context and topic. Ideally, one will periodically come back to the question of application during the course and inquire about the students' experience to ensure that what has been learned is not only *informing* the students but *forming* their character and *transforming* them through specific practices, habits or actions. Central to Latin American pedagogy, the educator is someone who facilitates the learning process and both the educator and educated are mutually shaped, challenged and encouraged to embody greater integrity as persons.

Without unduly stretching the connection, I suggest that this teaching method is not very distant from the Teacher's, who, after observing that a student had answered the question correctly, said: "Go and do likewise."

Hugo Herfst is Director of Spirituality at KLC and an Associate Fellow.

Pastors and artists in CONVERSATION

HEIDI SALZWEDEL



Paul Gauguin, *The Painter of Sunflowers*

In an ecumenical panel discussion at the Artists' Gathering held in the picturesque Cape Winelands of South Africa, a diverse group of pastors from various denominations and backgrounds came together to explore the value of the arts in both historical and contemporary Christian contexts. The panellists included Rev Carel Pienaar, Dr Angelique Havenga, Mandla Nyathi and Stephan Cloete.[1] Discussion questions were carefully formulated in response to a survey that had been circulated to the wider Artists' Gathering community by organisers Heidi Salzwedel and KRUX Arts director Ydi Carstens. The rich dialogue, steeped in a wealth of theological insights and personal experiences, underscored the profound role of the arts in spiritual reflection, worship and community engagement across the ages.

Historical Context for the Arts – Carel Pienaar

It was a crisp Saturday afternoon in spring and artists made their way to the main hall after enjoying a hearty lunch together at the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality in Wellington, South Africa. The conversation began with a reflective look into the historical significance of the arts in Christian religious practice. Rev Carel Pienaar, who specialised in early church history, emphasised two main concepts: the importance of symbols and of indigenising one's faith.

In early Christian art, the symbols in catacombs were used as a form of identity and for teaching. A fish (*ichthus*: an acronym for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour" in Greek) was used to point out Christian identity in secret in an age of acute persecution for the early church. Carel explained how symbols need interpretation, and that the symbol and the interpretation unlock one another with a tremendous synergy. He emphasised how artists have the privilege of creating and depicting the symbols that are identity markers and as such are able to instruct a community.

He also highlighted the power of visual arts in contextualising the gospel; that there is value in creatively and culturally interpreting one's faith in art forms that are unique to one's own culture. Early Greco-Roman Christians indigenised their art forms as a community and "made it their own." They grasped the gospel culturally, and by implication aesthetically too, and this is what gave them deeper roots in their expression of faith. He explained that when your faith becomes contextualised and part of the soil, then you can see that people have "got it."

1 Rev Carel Pienaar serves at Gracefields Church in Fish Hoek, Cape Town and has an MA in Church History and Dogma. Dr Angelique Havenga is an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and serves at Stellenbosch Moederkerk/Kruiskerk. Her research interests include sacramental theology, the Eucharist, and theological readings of popular culture. Stephan Cloete teaches Music Production at the Pneumatix Arts Academy and is the worship pastor at Stellenbosch Gemeente Church. Mandla Nyathi was formerly a pastor with Every Nation Church and now leads a creative platform called Epiphany.

Contemporary Reflections on Art and Spirituality – Angelique Havenga

Angelique Havenga suggests that, in the early church, artists helped Christians to discover what it means to become more fully human. Now artists need to do the same: help Christians to re-discover what it means to be human, but to go further and discover what this re-humanising process might mean amidst a dehumanising digital age. Art, in this view, is not merely decorative but sacramental, bridging the divine and the mundane, and inviting individuals to a more profound experience of the holy. She paints a scene of what her role as a pastor of students is like:

> As a pastor serving students every day I'm acutely aware of this strange new world we live in, one that is driven by many forces that dehumanise, disembody and reduce us to names on a screen, account information on a bank statement, or a title on a worksheet, and I know there are some students here so I can also add a student number on a plastic access card. It is a world marked by virtual experiences; avatars, likes, reactions, algorithms, watch times and by market driven economies. It is marked by political polarisation, digitisation, and the continuous advancement of technology, and it's amidst these realities where we need to navigate what it means to be a Christian now.

Angelique offered a few solutions to the issue of dehumanisation and called artists to action. She believes the role of artists is significant in both the church and society today in the pursuit of becoming more fully human. The arts help people to know that they are embodied beings that live within a timeframe, a specific location and in community with others. Art teaches humans to engage with our own embodiment because it has to do with materiality, sound, form, texture and colour; with things we can experience with our senses.

Angelique Havenga addresses the gathering.

Participants enjoy the beautiful grounds of the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality in Wellington in the Cape winelands.

"Artists invite us back into ourselves," she argues, and goes on to explain that we are called into our bodily existence by touching, taking in aromas, hearing and by what we see – to experience again what it means to be fully alive. Part of being alive is to feel. Art also reminds us of our emotions and it conjures up joy but also allows us to lament. Art helps us to see so much further into the complex human emotional experience than the WhatsApp emojis on our devices.

Biblical Mandate for the Arts and Some Disconnects between Artists and Church – Mandla Nyathi

Mandla outlined three main ideas: the biblical instruction to beautify the tabernacle, the artist's ability to show the holy in the everyday, and lastly, a few thoughts on how the church can better celebrate the arts.

He explained that the first biblical mention of the Spirit within a person was about the artist, Bezalel, in Exodus 31. He was tasked with beautifying the tabernacle, God's chosen place for worship, highlighting the importance placed on artists by God. It is a mandate that God gives to the artist by breathing his spirit into him and thus providing the ability to create according to God's patterns. Bezalel and his assistants were given instructions about the materials and specifications of the work too. While in the past God gave specific instruction to artists on how to beautify the tabernacle, today, argued Mandla, he gives artists the role of inscribing the holy into the everyday through beauty.

Artists reveal God's beauty in everyday things, helping others see and appreciate the holy in the ordinary. Mandla quoted the passage from Isaiah: "Heaven's my throne, earth is my footstool. What sort of house could you build for me?" (Isa 66:1–2, *The Message*) and went on to aptly pose some helpful rhetorical questions:

> What does it look like for us [artists] to bring out the beauty and the glory of those things pointing to the wonder of God …? How do we take the normal things of every day and bring out the wonder and the glory of those things?

Top: (Left to right) Dr JB Krohn (convener), Mandla Nyathi, Dr Angelique Havenga, Rev Carel Pienaar, Stephan Cloete.
Below: Stephan Cloete.

Charles Demuth, *After Sir Christopher Wren* (1920)

He concluded his presentation by suggesting that there is a disconnect between the church and artists due to a lack of celebration of everyday creativity and the sacredness of creation. He reminds us that you "get what you celebrate." One of the things we need to do is create opportunities within the church context that celebrates the arts. Too often the communication between a church leader and an artist is something like: "I know you're doing that, and I give you my blessing, but don't talk about us being part of it." He suggests that there is another way; a way where people feel like the arts are part of the church. Mandla ran a creative programme in Cape Town called "That Beautiful Thing," where creatives were celebrated and encouraged. It was not a church but was linked with one. Many artists ended up visiting and joining churches afterwards because of first and foremost being encouraged and "seen" as the persons that they are.

Practical Applications for Artists and the Church – Stephan Cloete

Finally, Stephan Cloete, from his experience as a worship pastor, suggests a few practical applications in church congregations. Stephan firstly told his story of how he, as a teenager, was drawn into worship. He got involved in a worship team at a local Methodist church and it became his life very quickly. Twenty-five years later he is still leading congregational worship.

He mentioned a useful idea by Gideon Strauss called the "hospitality framework" wherein God creates a space and then fills it with life – much like God created the

earth and then filled it with living things. He mentioned that God performed an "act of creating a space that is [firstly] able to contain life" and then we as his creative handiwork are making spaces of worship here, and we're making those spaces hospitable. We are co-creators with God in this ongoing place of creation. He recommended reading Aaron Niequist's *The Eternal Current: How a Practice-Based Faith Can Save Us from Drowning*.[1] What he gleaned from the book is that the church should function like a gymnasium, where regular practice and engagement lead to spiritual growth and transformation. We are what we habitually practise. Artists should focus on stepping forward in their churches and creating environments that encourage participation and collaboration, rather than mere consumption. Sometimes an artist will need to demonstrate to the congregation what is possible through creativity.

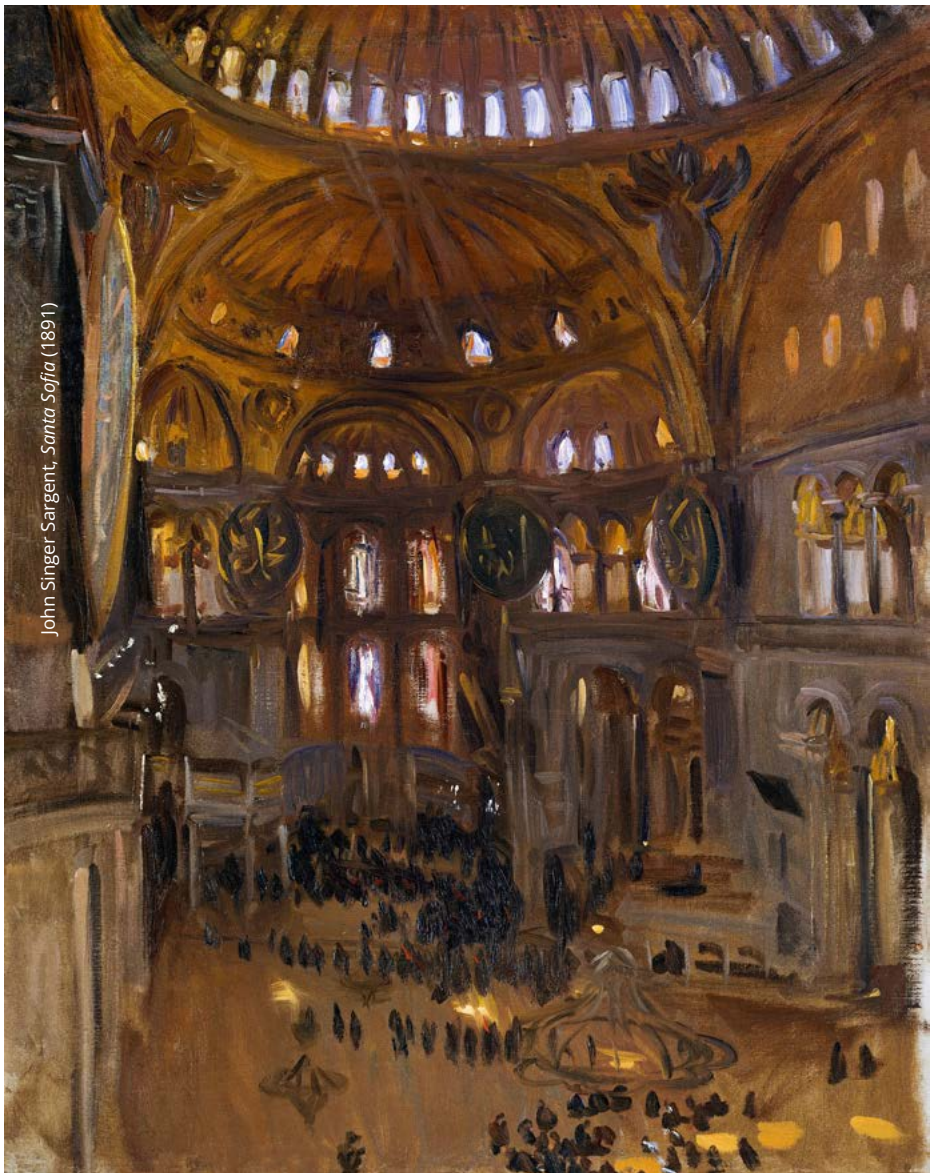
The panel discussion shed light and offered much food for thought on the integral role of art in both historical and contemporary contexts within the church. The insights that were shared emphasised the need for a deeper connection between the church and its artists, fostering a space where creativity can thrive and facilitate spiritual formation. As artists, we are called to be co-creators with God, using our talents to create hospitable spaces. However, this journey is not without its challenges. The lack of understanding and support for artists can be deeply discouraging. Financial struggles often overshadow the significance of the artists' role in society, leading many creatives to lose track of their calling. But we must remember that our work as artists is vital. We have the God-breathed mandate to create. The panellists collectively called for a renewed commitment within the church to embrace and support the arts, not as an optional embellishment but as a core component of worship and mission.

Heidi Salzwedel is an artist, writer and educator who lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa. 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. Watch the full panel discussion and more about the history of the Artists' Gathering on @kruxmedia206 on YouTube.

All photos were taken by Cristan Barnard, a member of KRUX, and are used with permission.

1 Aaron Niequist, *The Eternal Current: How a Practice-Based Faith Can Save Us from Drowning* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2018).



John Singer Sargent, *Santa Sofia* (1891)

The Art of Hervé Tullet

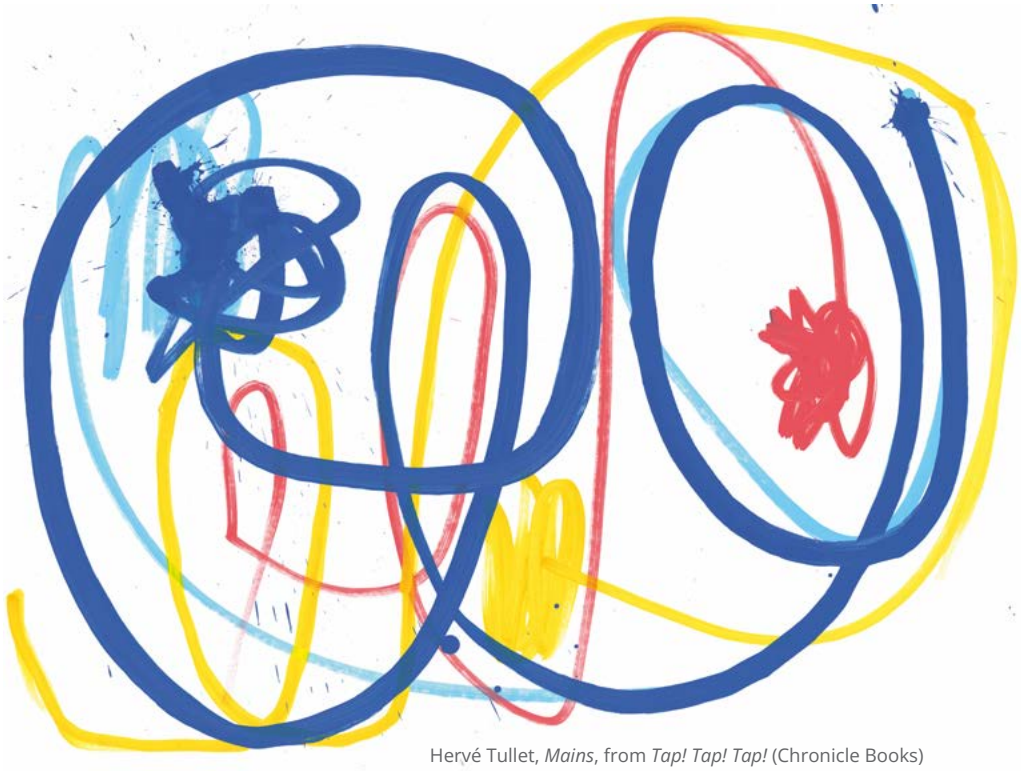
to Wonder, to Feel, to Touch

Before you read any further, take some paper and a pen, any pen, or a pencil, or even a paint brush. Colours are best. Now, play. Pardon? Just draw something. But I can't draw! Splodge. Doodle. Twist a line across the page. Make an outline of your hand. What colour should it be? Anything you like. Cut it up, stick it down, but shuffled like a random pack of cards. Explore, invent, have fun. What have you got? Art. Art? "Bien sûr!", to use the French.

KEVIN O'DONNELL

Hervé Tullet's art is based on movement, gesture, paint, and stains. He has the mantra "dots, lines, stain and scribbles," as these are a vocabulary that a child can understand. Tullet produces art for children, pre-school children. He has said that a baby is a like a fine artist with her gurgles and giggles and gestures and appreciations. He has children in rapt attention as he reads to them, showing the simple pictures in his books of vivid colours and making sounds along the way. "Blop!", "Oh!", "Oooh", and things like that. They turn the pages and touch the pictures or roll a dice. One of my favourites is making a monster. "How many eyes does it have?" *Roll the dice.* "Five." And so on.

Herve's portrait
© Seoul Arts Center



Hervé Tullet, *Mains*, from *Tap! Tap! Tap!* (Chronicle Books)

When he works with groups of children there can be a class, a group in a library, or 50+ in a hall or outside with long strips of paper, paint, crayons, marker pens and the artist who guides them like a conductor, though the lines and shapes and splashes of colour are more akin to the composition of a jazz player in his mind. There is a video clip of him with a large group of children on a playing field in Xiamen in China as they run this way and that creating. One of his joys is to take this creativity to difficult areas, such as schools, projects and hospitals, and to see a smile on a face. He told me that the more he discovers that his work is useful and is working for libraries and teachers, the more he delights in trying to feed their creativity. He describes his work as the art of play.

Tullet has published more than eighty books, and still counting. Many are short, sometimes board books on a simple theme such as hands or play or mixing colours, though he has produced longer books which collect resources and ideas and explain a little more about his style and vision. His early work, *Press Here*, is perhaps a good place to start for those who are new to him. It takes you into its few pages, pressing, touching, shaking the book. The book is important as it is visual and tactile. He wants to get children interested in the look and feel of a book. For the young children, the reading experience is more than the physical book, though. It is an interaction and a sharing between reader and child. When he has finished a book, it is not finished, for the reader becomes part of it in their experience. It is completed by anyone reading it in their own way. He says, "An author is part of a group of people." Tullet launched *L'Expo Ideale* to allow people to make their own Tullet exhibition in a gallery, a hall, a bedroom or even a shoe box. Groups joined in online, and it is an ongoing project in so far as a book of resources and ideas is available. This reminds me of the term "intertextuality" as coined by the semiologist, philosopher and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva. Intertextuality is the influence of different sources and ideas upon one another, so that there are, in fact, no isolated texts. Everything is part of a weave of words and thoughts and expressions and no writing, no story, no book, just falls out of the sky. Furthermore, the text continues with the readers. Their narrative is part of the book. This can be how the reader is affected by the book, but it is more than that. The reader lives a life, and the book takes part in it. One weave, one continuous text. In that sense, a book is never finished. The group activities where children run around painting and drawing on communal paper sheets do not produce what we would call a book, exactly, but Tullet is keen to stress that they are all part of the work for when people are moving from one place to another the drawing does not belong to them.

For the young children, the reading experience is more than the physical book, though. It is an interaction and a sharing between reader and child.

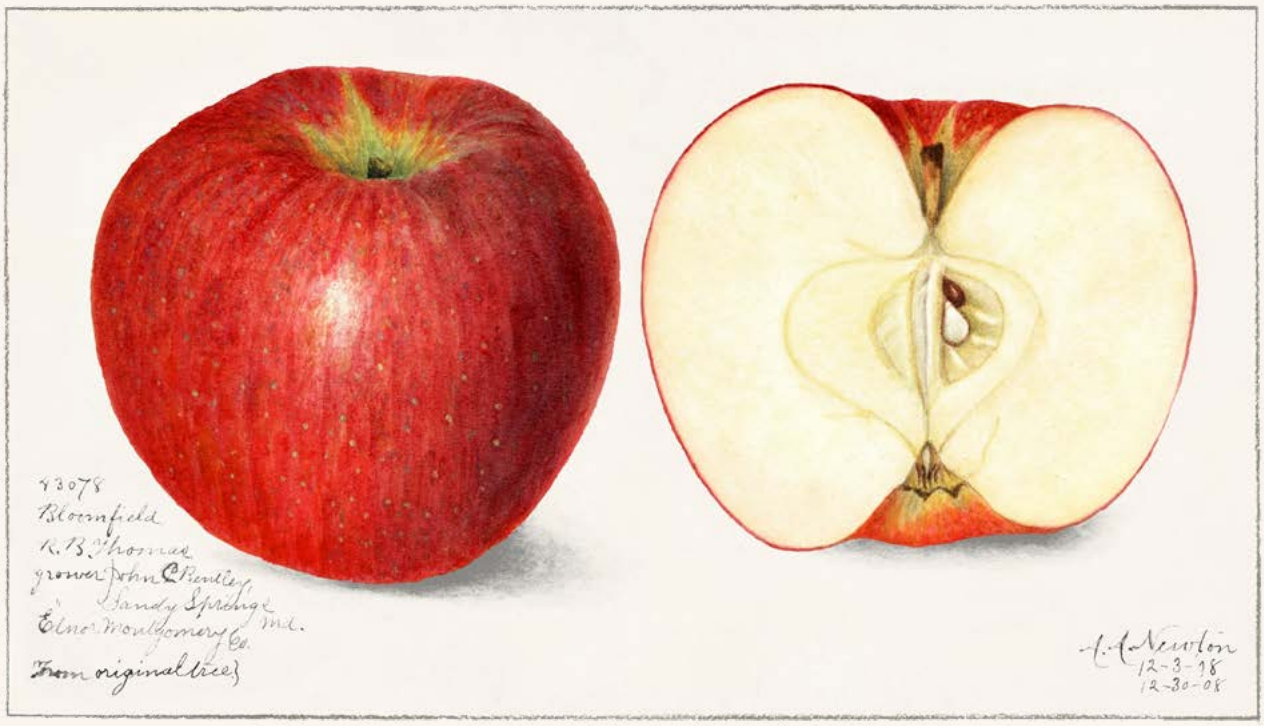
He hasn't always made art in this way. Until he was about thirty-five, he worked as an advertising director, but this was not really who he wanted to be. Since beginning his exhibitions, workshops, and books, he has had a studio at home in Paris, then in Harlem, and back in Paris again. Why does he do it? It is play. It is joyful. It is fun and it is sharing. It is not that he wants to turn young children into artists but to look at the world around them and the need for creativity, to make amazing and useful things, as he puts it. Children want to explore and invent and play. Play is important, for the concept of a game drives his art as his fascination for the game and to make people want to play. The game needs surprise ("my desire is always to surprise") and each turning of the page can provide this. This opens the imagination, and, as he states, "Art is a way to help people to see, to look." There is a beauty in his work, not only with its fun and primary colours, but in a joy in life, a vitality, and a vivacity. There is beauty in the value of love, in the care for the child and in helping to open their eyes to see in fresh ways things that are always there but open up anew.

It would be wrong to limit Tullet's work to children, though. "I don't speak to children. I speak to everybody. I speak to the eyes." To "speak to the eyes" is to Wonder, to Feel, to Touch, words of my own that I have chosen deliberately as they segue into their use in my study of spirituality as a general, human quality (and not just the religious). Tullet's work comes alive for me in that context, and also as I am a creative thinker and educationalist. Even an atheist has a spirituality in the sense that I am using here, and whatever we make of the world, there is beauty, there is love, there is play and therefore there can be Art. I can't help to conclude by dipping my proverbial brush into a dab of my own faith, though. In the Gospels Jesus called little children to him, blessed them, told his disciples to become like them, and told them to be born anew within. Furthermore, I can't help thinking that the resurrection story itself is a trip into movement, opening and surprise (cf. 1 Cor 2:9: "the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard"). Resurrection is a form of surprise at turning the page. Faith is not childish, but it must never lose sight of the child. Long may Tullet make dots, lines, stain and scribbles. Play on.

Kevin O'Donnell is an author, a priest of the diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and an auxiliary chaplain at the Basilica of Notre Dame de Pontmain in France.

Hervé Tullet's books are translated into English by Chronicle Books. A good place to start is with Press Here*, and the overview of his work in* The Art of Play. *Examples of books, artwork and video clips can be found on his website https://herve-tullet.com/, including his activity in Xiamen.*

Hervé Tullet hosting an event with kids in Xiamen.



Amanda Almira Newton, *Apples* (1908, edited)

On Why You Should Use an Encyclopaedia

and Not Google

TOBY PAYNE

The ubiquity of the phrase, "Just Google it," reveals a great deal of our cultural moment. Wondering how many grams are in a cup of flour? "Just Google it." Unsure of which train to catch in order to get to your destination the fastest? "Just Google it." Faced with a piercing and difficult question from a child? "*Just Google it*"?

With my current class of seven-year-olds, we go for biweekly nature walks. On these we encounter all manner of things to see, to touch, to hear, to feel. Some are familiar – the horse chestnut, the brook we cross over. Others are more novel – a crested bird, something peculiar on the ground, an unknown call from a tree nearby. Occasionally, we come across things that neither the children nor myself can identify. The most straightforward solution to this seeming incomprehension is, of course, the solution for all of our other queries and questions. "Just Google it."

This approach is neither the best for the child in that very moment, nor in the long term. Learning, in our modern age, is something that evangelists for the digital movement say has never been easier. Languages near and far, ancient and modern, can be accessed and purportedly mastered with an instant download. Previously exclusive courses can be accessed, videos on all manner of topics watched, questions answered.

Yet learning, like all kinds of formation, is not something that comes easily. The great thinkers of the past understood that learning requires effort, difficulty, discipline, and it happens far slower than we might like. As the Victorian educationalist Charlotte Mason puts it, education is "the discipline of habit."[1]

In our school setting, instead of relying on the instant benefits of the digital age, we encourage consulting guidebooks and encyclopaedias. The wonders of these tools of learning are that they require your attention and force of will. You really need to look at your leaf, or your flower, or your eggshell. How many fronds does it have? Is it variegated or not? Speckled or smooth? How we perceive the depth of an object depends on our abilities

1 Charlotte Mason, *An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education* (1923, reprint Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1989), Preface.

> *"The liberation of human attention may be the defining moral and political struggle of our time."*
>
> James Williams

to patiently and deliberately attend to it. These processes of discernment require our energies and our agency. Furthermore, it may also be that you encounter other stimulating and gripping pieces of information. While flicking to find "London Plane," you will also stumble across "Larch" and "Lime." There are other avenues of curiosity to pursue, other things that may pique your interest and draw you toward them. This is real, exciting learning that feeds the curious mind of a child.

The thing that, I believe, is most harmed in our digital age is our power of attention. I have spent some of the last two years thinking about attentional malformation, and the manifold ways that the digital age warps and re-designates what it even is to attend to anything at all. In the paradigm-altering work, *A Web of Our Own Making,* Antón Barba-Kay[2] asserts that the whole structure of the internet is essentially set up to capture, and inevitably monetise your attention. This, of course means that our digital devices impoverish our capacity to attend to things well. Barba-Kay makes the claim that not only does digital technology make it harder to attend to something, but it more perniciously reveals to us that we would much rather be satiated online than sustain attention to anyone or anything. Barba-Kay claims that our natural state is the effortless desire for absence. The mind, online, is directed toward no end at all.

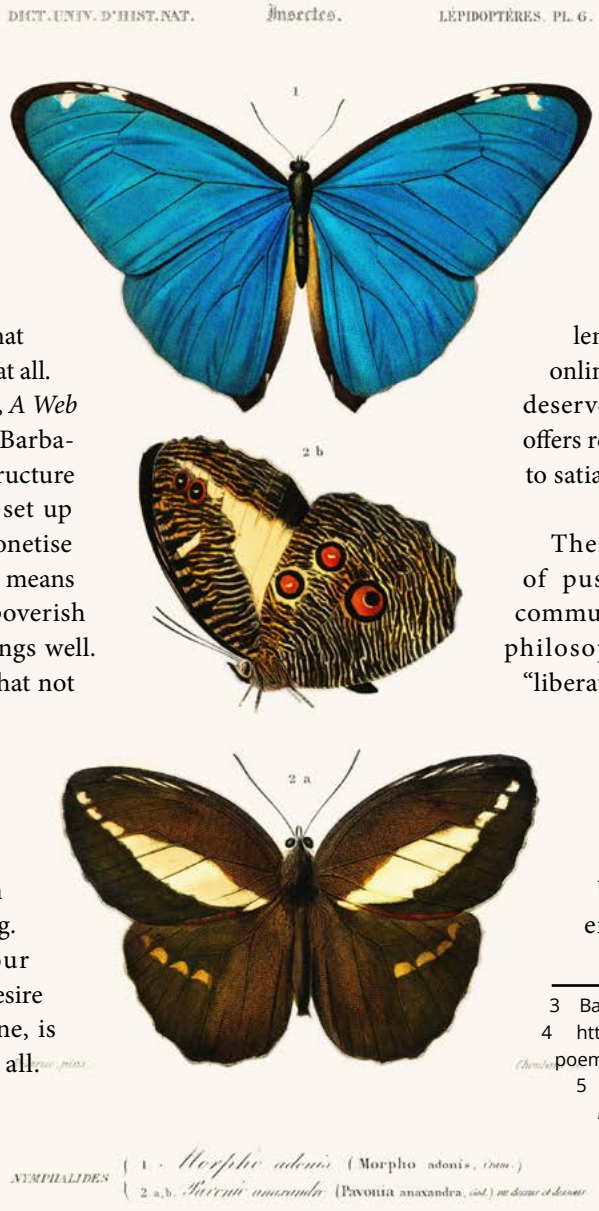


Illustration: Charles Dessalines D' Orbigny (1806-1876)

Near the conclusion, he states boldly: "digital technology is spiritual opium."[3] We are hooked.

This is not a healthy backdrop in which children can be formed well in the educational sphere. The evangelists of the digital age would have it that nearly all our teaching be conducted with a nod to the technologies of the future. In my short time as a teacher, I have seen things such as PE lessons that have children inside a classroom watching a YouTube video of a figure dancing. This is no way to form children to look at the world in all its "counter, original, spare, strange" glory, as the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it.[4] Rather than being taught to see through the optical lenses of the frictionless world of online (mal)attentiveness, children deserve a model of education that offers real, tangible things, not merely to satiate but to *stretch*.

There is a slowly rising tide of pushback beyond our small community in Cambridge. For the philosopher James Williams the "liberation of human attention may be the defining moral and political struggle of our time."[5] Some say that the answer is for individuals to exercise greater discipline, but for Williams, it is environmental changes that

2 Antón Barba-Kay, A *Web of Our Own Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

3 Barba-Kay, A *Web of Our Own Making*, 241.

4 https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44399/pied-beauty

5 James Williams, *Stand Out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), xii.

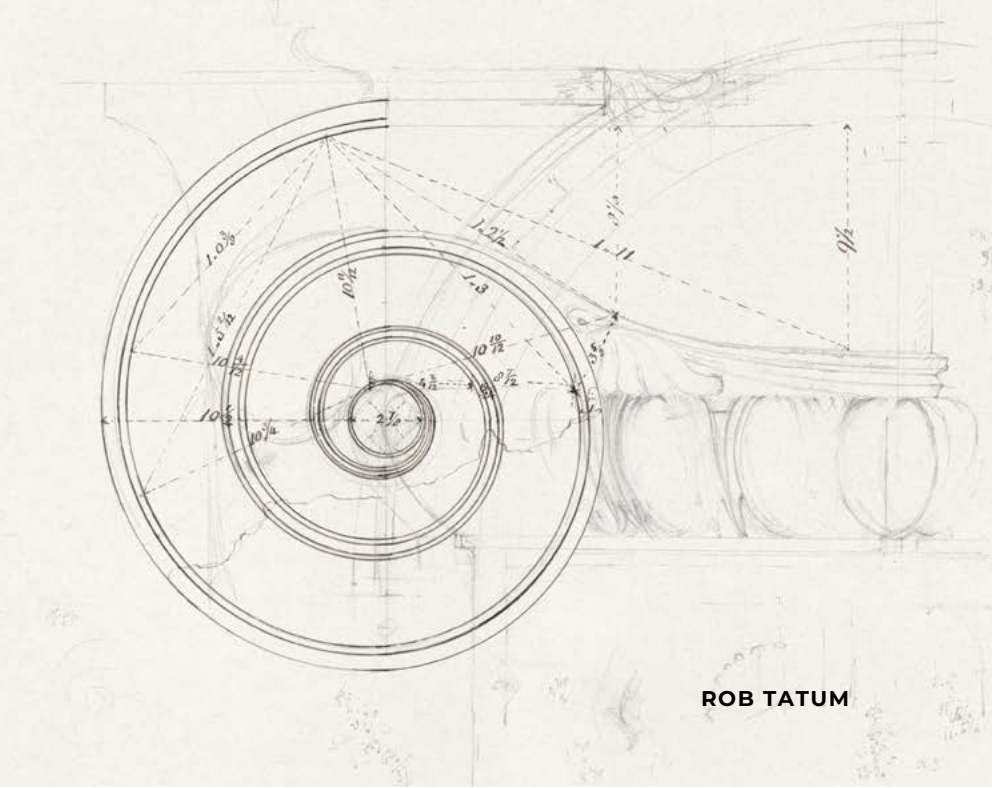
Illustration: A.J.E. Terzi

will really make the difference.[6] Schools need to be spaces that resist the kraken-like tentacles of the digital age. Movements for smartphone free education are right and good, so too are efforts to introduce "forest school" and outdoor learning. It is in the interests of these digital evangelists to make it an individualised choice; we must push for collective and systemic action. As Charlotte Mason writes in *Home Education* (1886): "It is impossible to overstate the importance of this habit of attention … and should be made the primary object of all mental discipline."[7] Mason calls attention a habit that must be cultivated, but habit is itself a discipline that is made harder by the plague of attentional anaemia.

When summing up his work on attention, the American philosopher and psychologist William James[8] writes that no matter how scatter-brained a person may be, "if he really *care* for a subject, he will return to it incessantly from his incessant wanderings." At the heart of attention, for James, is care. There is a way to ensure that the children in our care avoid being ensnared in this similar web of our own making. What educationalists must do is to offer a full and brimming vision of learning and of formation. This includes a vision of education that builds on the vision of figures like William James and Charlotte Mason. The educational vision that holds before the child an encyclopaedia filled to the brim with exciting and enticing facts, which requires their effort and perseverance, that draws them toward the good is the better way. We fail something in their very person if we serve them a bland and tasteless meal, rather than an abundant feast.

6 In Johann Hari, "Why You Can't Pay Attention," *Primer* (2022).
7 Charlotte Mason, *Home Education* (1886, reprint Nevada: New West Press, 2023) 146.
8 William James, "Talks to Teachers on Psychology," *The Atlantic* (1899).

Toby Payne is a primary school teacher at Heritage School, Cambridge. He recently completed an MEd looking at the philosophy of attention in the Digital Age.



Robert Smirke, *Architectural Drawing* (1802-1804)

Building a Better Economic Future

ROB TATUM

As a Christian economist, I often contemplate what economic future we might build toward. I perceive five options, though some may be inappropriate or impractical, and one is clearly wrong.

1 First, as Christians, we could work to build a separate economy with foundations in Christ. However, this approach is not appropriate. As John 17 recognizes, we are in the world even though we are not of it. We don't need a grand or distinct Christian economics, just one that is authentic and normed by Scripture.

2 Second, we could work to rebuild the economy on the foundation of Christ. As 1 Corinthians 3 suggests, a foundation built on Christ is the only one that will survive final judgment. Wonderful as this is, it will not occur without changes of hearts or coercion, the latter of which is also inappropriate. Still, it does not hurt to contemplate what such an economy could look like and how we might yield an approximation or second-best solution for such an economy.

3 Third, policies and policy areas themselves can be built on a foundation of Scripture and Christ. If the economy were a house, a room could be added or remodeled here or there. Such policies would demonstrate to the wider world the applicability and relevance of our faith to contemporary issues in concrete ways and without coercion.

4 Fourth, with our foundation in Scripture, we could serve the economic building or remodeling process as design critics. We might recommend a window that will let God's light shine in. We might recommend a door that will open the way to new understanding as to the relevance of our faith. We might even recommend an additional bedroom that could house those shut out by the existing economy. Sometimes it might be fine and appropriate just to sound the alarms as the Old Testament prophets did, even if no one is listening. However, Micah 4:1-4 reminds us that others may listen and even seek out good advice from Christians in the economic sphere. Regardless, Micah 4:5 calls us to serve our God even in a pluralistic world.

5 Now, the fifth option is what we don't want. We do not want to be Babel builders. I am referring here, of course, to the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, where builders developed

their own plans separate from God to reach the heavens. Even the Church can be brought into the world's way of building and be complicit in the evils of the day.

Of the five building options before us, I am partial to the design-critic one. Why? It certainly seems the least glamorous. However, it does not require us to be in the citadels of power. It does not require a fully fleshed out school of thought. It does allow us, though, to focus not only on what is being done policy-wise but also on what is missing, what is still needed for the economy. Those needs may differ from one place to another and from one time to another. So there will not be a one-size-fits-all Christian economic policy answer.

Given all of this, there is much Christians can do to help build a better economic future. Drawing inspiration from Matthew 9:37 and Luke 10:2, the building is plenty, but the workers are few.

Finally, Isaiah 58:12 notes that if we seek justice and righteousness and work toward the needs of the poor and oppressed "your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairers of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in."

May we build toward that future. Build as what matters to God matters to us. Build not to bring forward the kingdom of God in our own perception and power, but to better reflect the kingdom of God.

Prof Robert C. Tatum is the Cary Caperton Owen Distinguished Professor in Economics, University of North Carolina Asheville, and a Senior Research Fellow of KLC.

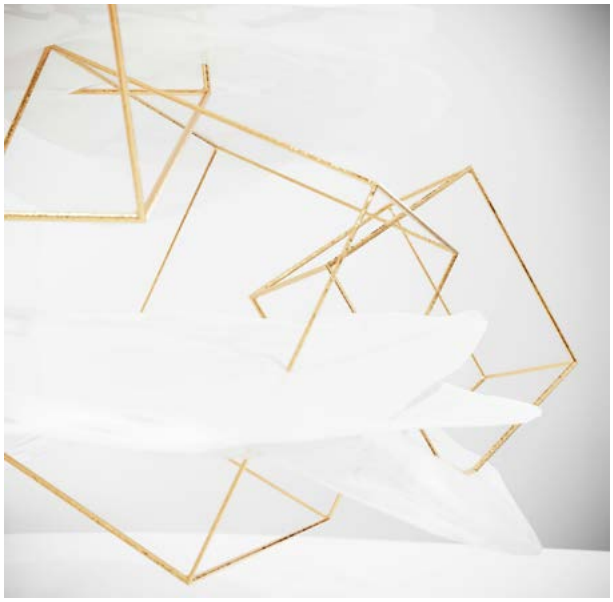
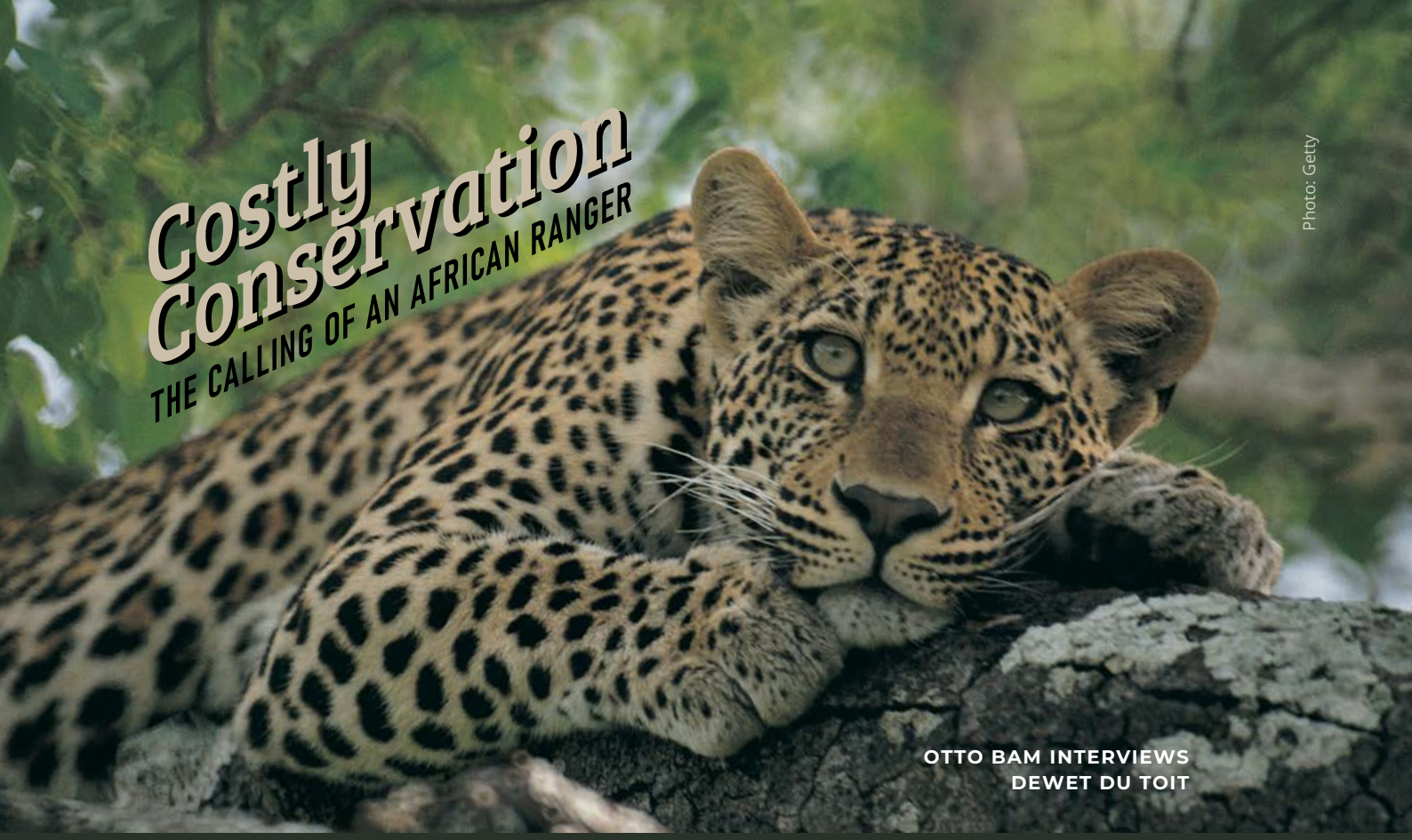


Photo: Galina Nelyubova



Costly Conservation

THE CALLING OF AN AFRICAN RANGER

Photo: Getty

OTTO BAM INTERVIEWS
DEWET DU TOIT

Dewet works at a reserve as an anti-poaching consultant, about 50 kilometers from South Africa's border with Botswana. I met Dewet years ago at a café that was owned by a mutual friend of ours, and we regulars spent much time in conversation at the counter. I was always struck by Dewet's sincere way of speaking. He seemed somehow to see things from a different, more sober vantage point than others I regularly interacted with. Now, having followed his work in the area of conservation for the past few years, I have found that those intuitions pointed to a remarkable life of courage, conviction and sacrifice.

OB: You work in the northern parts of South Africa as an anti-poaching consultant. What does this entail?

DDT: Simply put, my job is safeguarding threatened wildlife. The wildlife that we safeguard present very lucrative opportunities to criminal syndicates. That is why our men are armed with military small arms. We use thermal drones, tracking and apprehension K9s, in addition to the tried and tested human trackers in order to combat criminal infiltrations. I still sleep in the wilderness, in a basic tent, off the grid, with no running water. I choose to live like the rangers whose selection and training I oversee, because it helps me understand what hardships they experience. If you live like an executive, you do not understand what your men experience. African rangers are in general expected to endure large amounts of suffering. A lot of leaders ask their men to endure things which they would never be able to cope with, not even for 24 hours. I try to never ask of my men what I haven't gone through myself.

OB: What dangers do you face in this work?

DDT: I have worked in other positions where we have had high-stress, daily confrontations with armed criminal syndicates, sometimes severely outnumbered, but in my current position, animals pose the biggest risk. It is important to state that animals act in self-defense 95 percent of the time and that they have a very good reason to see humans, the number one killer on the planet, as a threat. Artemis (my K9) and I sleep about 300 metres from a river with a lot of hippos that come out to graze at night. There are a few crocodiles too so he cannot do his normal swimming, which he loves. A few weeks ago, we encountered a leopard after dark. The leopard warned us and we moved off. Leopards actually do prey on K9s so Artemis has to sleep inside the tent at night.

OB: Where does your work fit into the larger fight to protect endangered animals?

DDT: We form part of structures which address several of the variables in the battle against extinction. The ranger is the last line of defense between the syndicate and the endangered animal. When all other strategies have failed, it is up to the ranger to stop the slaughter. Addressing the demand is very important and there are some organisations working on that front, but we cannot do everything and so I try to focus on my specific area of expertise.

Poaching is the final nail in the coffin. We have arrived at a place in our planet's history where we, as humans, have wiped out the majority of the wild animals and their habitats, not exclusively, but mostly through greed or for sport. We are now in a state of emergency where we cannot afford even small-scale poaching to continue.

Commercial poaching can reach industrial levels and there are international organisations which annually harvest millions and millions of dollars' worth of wildlife illegally. To make matters worse, there is the concept known as the "economics of extinction": When a wildlife commodity like rhino horn decreases in supply, the value of the product increases. Alarmingly, this means that there is money to be made from extinction itself. Some groups would benefit from rhinos going extinct, because it would dramatically increase the value of their stockpile of rhino horn and once fully depleted, they can simply switch to the next product, whether that be lion parts (teeth, claws, bones), succulents or something else. Rhino horn is only a single example of an illegally traded wildlife commodity.

When you start bumping heads with kingpins, you start getting nervous because you are costing some high-level criminal bosses a lot of money. Wildlife is a segment of these high-level criminals' portfolios of misery, simply because it is very lucrative and non-taxable. Drug trafficking syndicates, for example, create distribution networks which are lubricated by bribery and corruption. Once such a distribution network is well established, the syndicates will move any illegal, non-taxable, high-value commodity through that channel.

Photo: Getty

Photo: Getty

Poachers are the pawns of these syndicates. But they are not merely victims of hunger. In general, most commercial poachers make a decision to try to make quick money. They live fast lives with bad consequences for the environment and for their own families. Several of the poachers I have encountered use drugs like meth. Are they to blame for the mass extinction we are facing at the moment? No. But must they be confronted and stopped? Absolutely. The African ranger is the final line which stands between the defenseless animal and complete annihilation.

OB: You can come across as fearless. For *The Last Shark* documentary you performed the daring act of swimming to an island known as a hot spot for great white sharks, in order to draw attention to their dwindling numbers. How do you deal with fear?

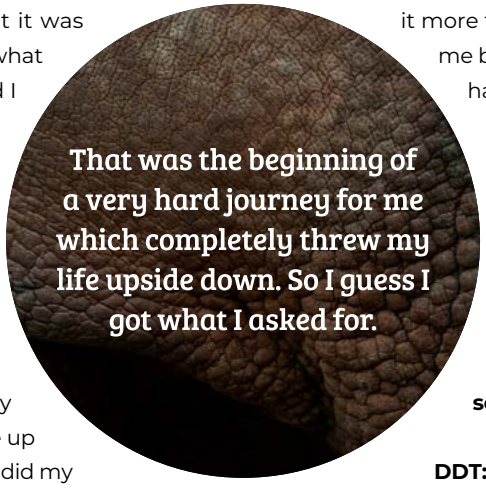
DDT: When we made the documentary, our message was clear: our "protected" marine animals are still being culled by the South African government. By pushing the boundary and confronting my fear, I briefly captured the imaginations of many in the media, helping to get our very important message out.

When I became a Christian, I wanted to preach the gospel in remote parts where you can lose your life for doing it. But now I think the frontier of the faith is to protect the most vulnerable and the weakest. That is why I am not disturbed by fear. I act from a place of conviction. I know what has to be done and I am willing to die for it. To many people it seems strange, but to me it is so obvious that I struggle to understand how people cannot see that something extreme needs to be done before it is too late.

OB: You have spoken before about a spiritual turning point in your life. Could you describe this transformation?

DDT: As a child I attended church and Sunday school, but it was a mere cultural formality. My parents were accomplished scientists and they were agnostic.

Agnosticism in my mind is a very natural place to arrive at for a middle-class, scientific, Westernised, logical, thinking person. Later in my life, I faced a situation that I found impossible to overcome, despite my natural fighting spirit, which I had since early childhood. After I tried every possible avenue and I realised that it was futile, that I was going to die, I did what any desperate person would do and I tried the only possible avenue left to me. I got on my knees and prayed. After metaphorically knocking on God's door, I experienced something supernatural. There was no scientific explanation for this experience. Neither I, nor my agnostic/atheist peers had sufficient explanations for it. Unfortunately my brain wasn't able to accept it. I came up with all kinds of explanations. And so did my parents and everyone else who I spoke to. I asked God to have patience with me and, if he is real, to show me something really undeniable: something I would not be able to explain away. That was the beginning of a very hard journey for me which completely threw my life upside down. So I guess I got what I asked for.



I went from being almost certain that God was just a myth to believing with unwavering certainty that God does exist. That journey is ongoing, but during the early phases I abandoned my dependence on wealth, I left an extremely lucrative career and many things which previously had been valuable to me. The most important part is that it pushed me onto a path that saw me realise the purpose for which I was created.

It was like I was being picked up and placed back onto the original path of my life. I remember my first anti-poaching unit instructor looking at the other paramilitary trainees and exclaiming loudly, "You see this red-headed guy? He was made for this!" And he was right. It wasn't that I was especially gifted. It was just that I wanted it more than anyone else. God had brought me back into my natural orbit. What was hard to the other trainees was easy to me, because I was where I wanted to be. My new life was a passion for me so the suffering was easy. It didn't even feel like suffering most of the time.

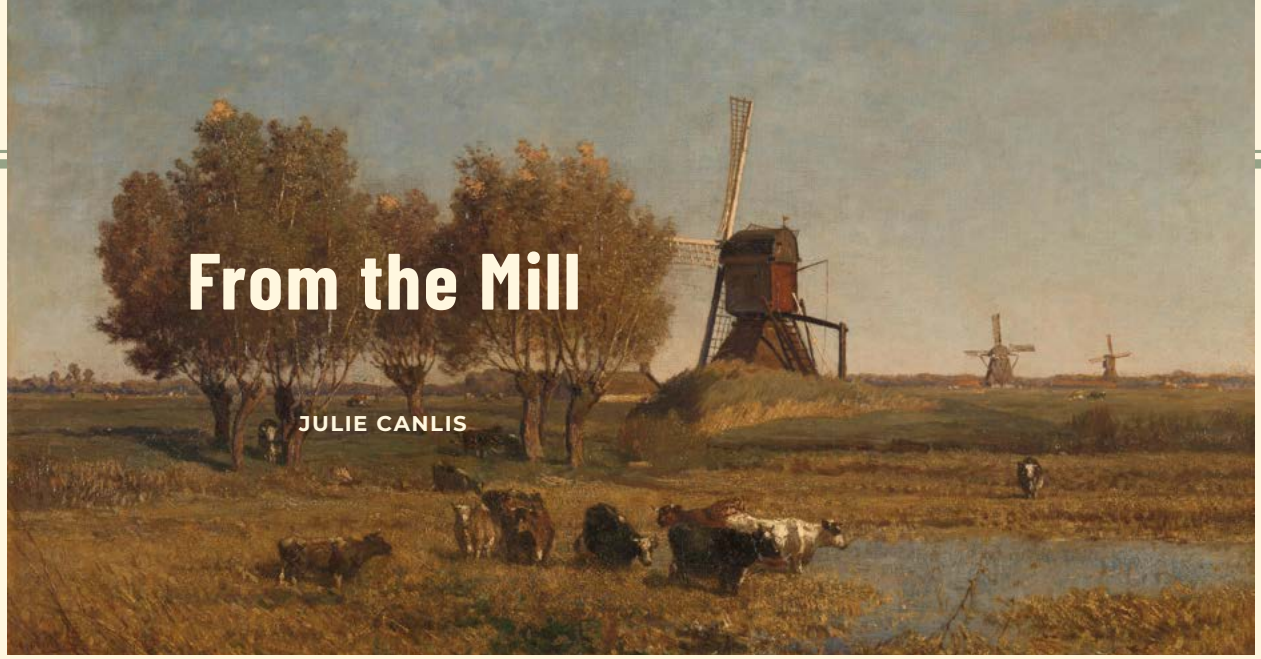
OB: How does the Bible help you make sense of the things you see and the mission you are on?

DDT: The Bible is very clear in that we are custodians of the earth. If I make you a custodian of my house and I come back and my K9 is living in absolute misery while you have destroyed my garden and dug up my whole piece of land to enrich your pockets for things you did not need for survival, I would be angry.

One of the most striking parts in the Bible is in Genesis, when God looks at what he created and he is pleased. But then he sees what man is doing on earth and it says that his heart is filled with sorrow. The bulletproof God we observe in the Old Testament shows an extremely vulnerable side. That is one of the most significant parts of the Bible to me and it has always served to inspire me to reflect on our actions.

Otto Bam is the Arts Manager for the KLC, the editor of the English side of artway.eu and an Associate Fellow of the KLC

Photo: Hu Chen



From the Mill

JULIE CANLIS

I arrived in Cambridge on a Saturday in early September, having just launched our fourth and final child to university, ready to pick up a book that was having trouble writing itself amidst parish, family, and neighborly responsibilities. And it wrote itself at Chesterton Mill!

I walked across Cambridge on a Monday morning, pushing jet lag behind me, and found myself in the KLC office with its huge picture windows, and which sits directly across from the iconic mill itself. As I settled in (with a cheery greeting from Otto) I found myself in a hive of creative and focused activity. In the subterranean cellar of the mill, I watched a vintner ferry bottles of wine up and down the steps into the dark recesses. Sometimes he would come flying out of the cellar with a bubbling pot of wax, with which he would proceed to seal his award-winning bottles in the old-fashioned way, leaving them outside to harden. Across the outer courtyard in another upper floor office is a trio of famous printmakers. Below them is a traditional craftsman-framer. Down the hall is a filmmaker. And one block away is one of the pre-eminent stone-carving workshops of Britain, led by a student of Eric Gill. Yet despite the flurry of artistry and production, because it is on the outskirts of Cambridge, it is a haven of calm and focused quiet.

Photo: Chesterton Mill

Over the six weeks that I shared a desk in the KLC office at Chesterton Mill, I found my prayer life expanding by regularly attending evensong services across the town (and discovered that the smaller the college, the more intimate the prayer; my favorites were Clare College and Gonville & Caius College). I was able to catch a few KLC events and be part of a congratulatory wine and nibbles party for the launch of the ArtWay website. I reconnected with professors from past schools I had attended or taught at. I had use of the KLC bike (read: Craig's personal bike) which halved my walking commute. I discovered the cultural adventure that is the dozens of restaurants along Mill Road. I must admit that I did not attempt to commandeer a punt (a flat-bottomed boat with a square-cut bow) but am waiting for my husband to arrive and risk that adventure with me!

Mostly, I was able to experience KLC as a place where integration is always happening, and conversations roam around topics such as theology of the child, modern Danish composers, Reformed hermeneutics, architecture, the legacy of Hans Rookmaaker ("Rookie"), and the virtues of South African wines (Craig and Otto being fairly outspoken here!). The relationship of KLC with the Cambridge Theological Federation gave access to various events, such as the Hulsean Lectures. And for me personally, my project on the theological development of the church calendar in the early stages of the church was helped immensely by access to the Cambridge University library. I was able to leave Cambridge with the bulk of my book finished, returning home to parish responsibilities and family with a deep sense of completion and gratitude. I hope any KLC member out there who can take a brief respite from their responsibilities can make the pilgrimage to Chesterton Mill. You will discover rich academic and spiritual rejuvenation waiting for you.

Julie Canlis is liturgical director at Trinity Church, Wenatchee, and author of Calvin's Ladder *and* A Theology of the Ordinary.

Kafka's Metamorphosis AND THE MINISTRY OF THE DARK ARTS

JORDAN PICKERING

I knew a guy who was converted through the ministry of a drug rehab centre. During one of their arts sessions, he got into trouble with his mentor for painting skulls and other dark symbols. He was trying to paint his transformation. His mentor saw it as depicting evil.

Christianity and the arts lock horns because art often explores human darkness. For many, Christianising the arts demands that we only depict the light, or that we always provide those in the dark a roadmap to redemption. The purpose of Christian art is to paint the parting in the clouds, to sound the gospel's distinctive note of hope. Darkness is an obvious adversary in Christian art, but is this its only role? Can Christians make art like *The Metamorphosis*?

Kafkaesque

Franz Kafka is renowned for his weird, dreamlike stories featuring alienated protagonists who are slowly whittled away by the brutality of indifference. His most famous work, *The Metamorphosis*, tells the story of a young man named Gregor who had been thrust into the role of breadwinner after his father's business failed. He wakes one morning to find that he has become a giant, ungainly cockroach. In one moment, Gregor moves from provider, rescuer, cherished brother and selfless son, to loathsome insect, inhuman, revolting, a disturbance of every peace. His terrified family confine him to his room, with only his sister briefly interested in exploring whether and what he will eat. As terror yields to disgust, and disgust yields to irritation, his family spend the days and weeks musing about what might be done about this inconvenience. One morning the housekeeper discovers Gregor's lifeless husk in his room, a fact that the family marks with a brief moment of solemnity. They leave the house to enjoy some free air, returning to the announcement that "the business of getting rid of that thing next door" has been seen to. Without their son's earnings, each family member has found that they are eminently employable after all and, being relieved of their burden, they leave the troubled house and start a happy and prosperous life elsewhere.

Kafka was a troubled man and died young of tuberculosis. He had a strained relationship with a brash, demanding father, doubting his own worth so deeply that he burned most of what he wrote. We know what it is to be Kafkaesque because the executor of his will disobeyed his dying wish to destroy the rest. Kafka was not a painter of the light and not a bringer of hope. So, should a Christian read *The Metamorphosis*, and more to the point, could a Christian *write* such a story?

Christians in the dark

Art is first of all a window. Marcel Proust observes: "Through art we can know another's view of the universe." It's important to read Kafka because it is a window into Kafka's world. It is easy for those in the dark to appear monstrous to us, to lose their human form, unless we learn to inhabit their worlds and to understand what *makes* them. Reading grows empathy and empathy is its own kind of light.

However, before we're finished understanding Kafka, we're typically already building pulpits by which to preach our answer to his darkness. Yet art is not a pulpit and it's not merely a window; art is a *mirror*, and so it is important that we understand not just Kafka but Gregor the bug too.

Christian artists are often anxious to present truth in their work, and what could be truer than the true story of

the whole world, the gospel? There is a pressure, therefore, to make art that reflects the gospel to the world. As good as this may be, it reconceives art as a kind of metaphysics, as snapshots of a total redemptive worldview. But *The Metamorphosis* is not a metaphysics. It is not what Kafka thinks the world is or how it ought to be. It is not a *total* story and yet it is a *true* one.

The Metamorphosis is a family story – a small, fiercely painful reflection of estrangement and disgust and relational disrepair. Gregor goes through a transformation but not a transfiguration, and there are many real-world people whose unhappy circumstances likewise remain unchanged. For some, the darkness does not lift, the clouds do not break. We're never given a peek behind the metaphor of Kafka's bug. As many have observed, it might mirror the experience of the disabled, the ill, the aged, but Kafka refuses to give it a familiar face. The real world is full of people whose humanity has slipped, and whose presence now disturbs my peace. For many people – too many – Gregor's ending is where their story ends too.

It is in this kind of mirroring that the prophetic role of dark art emerges. Redemption is a wonderful story and Christians pursue a hope that is unique in the world, but redemption is not the *only* true story. When every story that Christians tell resolves in redemption, when we offer easy answers to questions that may really have no solution at all, such mirrors start to lose their ring of truth. Human experience encompasses both day *and* night. Dawn is a certainty but, even for Christians, it is not given to everyone to see the dawn rise. There are phases of life in which darkness and lament must be lived and lived to the full. It is a false friend who can only laugh with those who laugh and never mourn with those who mourn. Stories of despair are not (or not necessarily) telling us the untruth of a world without hope. Rather, they can be a visceral awakening to the truth that hope and happiness are no one's birthright.

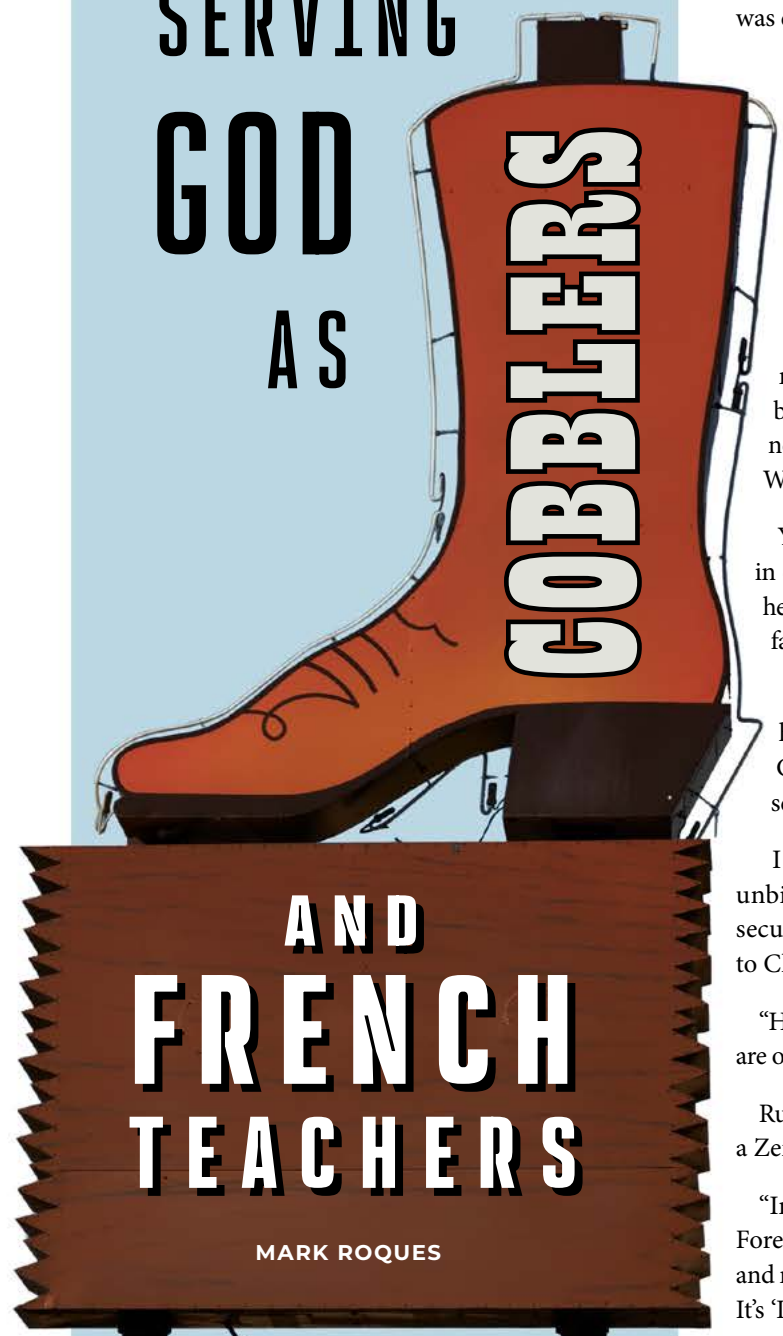
One searches in vain for any relief from Kafka's picture of despair, but it is not the mirror of Gregor the bug that we're left with, but that of his family – the ones who paradoxically *do* experience a happy resolution and a new dawn. Gregor was robbed of his humanity, but the happy ending for his family only masks their greater inhumanity. A black mirror it may be, but it is one with which Christian theology reverberates too. Kafka tells us that we are without excuse – endings will only ever be dark unless we relearn enough humanity to renounce self, to embrace our real-world Gregors and to write them a different ending.

Jordan Pickering is Director of Media at KLC, an Associate Editor of TBP *and an Associate Fellow of the KLC.*

Francisco Goya was a Spanish court painter whose work became increasingly dark and pessimistic following the loss of his hearing, the death of his wife and the atrocities he witnessed in the Peninsula War. In c.1814 he created a series of etchings called *The Disaster of War*, depicting, among other things, the murder of clerics while French soldiers looted their churches (below: *This is How it Happened*). In seclusion later in life, he made his so-called "black paintings" directly onto the walls of his house, including *Saturn Devouring his Son* (right). As bleak as such works are, the horrible truths they tell about humanity aren't a far cry from the harsh words of biblical prophets.

SERVING GOD AS COBBLERS AND FRENCH TEACHERS

MARK ROQUES



How can we serve God outside the church sphere? Many Christians today are aware of the problem of dualism: the sacred/secular split. It's easy to understand that preachers, pastors, evangelists and apologists are serving God but what about cobblers and French teachers?

William Tyndale (1494-1536) is famous for translating the Bible into English, but few know how much he affirmed the calling of the humble cobbler. Indeed, one of the articles of heresy against Tyndale, the leading English Reformer, who was executed for heresy in 1536, was that he taught:

> Let every person, no matter their craft or occupation, whether brewer, baker, tailor, grocer, merchant or farmer, commit their work to the well-being of the community, serving their fellow people as they would serve Christ himself.[1]

We can imagine Christian cobblers working together in a vibrant community making shoes, loving the leather and their customers by infusing the manufacture of shoes with Christ's love and wisdom but isn't the teaching of French or German completely neutral? Surely it has nothing to do with Christian faith. We need to think again.

Years ago, when I lived in Bath I was chatting to Ruth in church after the service. I began to probe Ruth about her job as a French teacher. I asked her how her Christian faith impacted the way she taught her subject.

She looked at me with thinly disguised disdain. "It has nothing to do with my faith. I just teach French. Church is in the religious box and French is in the secular box."

I thought I needed to challenge this popular but unbiblical dualism. We should not divide life into the secular bit and the sacred bit. Doesn't everything belong to Christ the Lord?

"Have you ever thought about the hidden messages that are often being communicated in the way we teach French?"

Ruth looked at me as if I had just told her I had become a Zen Buddhist. I launched into my patter.

"In my view the dominant way of teaching Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) is caught up in an individualist and materialist story. It's all about me and my consumption. It's 'I shop therefore I am' or in Latin '*Tesco ergo sum*.'"

Ruth grimaced at my feeble Latin joke and began to look slightly desperate and forlorn. "Why are you saying this? French teaching has nothing to do with faith!"

"Just look at a typical French lesson, Ruth. Often the focus is upon self-governing individuals buying ice creams, making complaints about hotels and enquiring about where to go shopping. I call this the self-centred tourist worldview. 'I want a lobster flavoured ice cream now.' 'I want to make a complaint about the ugly curtains.' 'I am very angry about

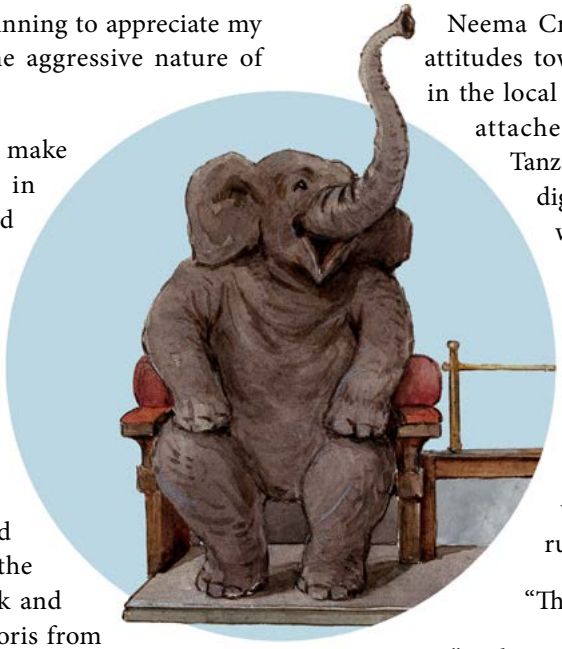
1 William Tyndale, *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, 1847. Edited by Tom Sumrall 2024. Kindle, location 1487.

the stale croissants.' 'Why is the bath so big?' 'Why must we queue outside with no air conditioning?"

Ruth relaxed slightly and murmured. "I think I see what you're getting at Rocky. You are concerned about an entitlement mindset. Is that right?"

"Brainy boffins (e.g., Dr David I. Smith) have studied MFL textbooks and they are struck by how the dominant story of our western world, consumerism, is the hidden, pulsating theme. Textbooks often present people as egocentric and materialistic. They live as if there is no God, and everything is just physical so shop till you drop and grab that bargain before Roger beats you to it."

Ruth was now beginning to soften, and her disdain was ebbing away. She was beginning to appreciate my cut-diamond insights into the aggressive nature of consumerism. I steamed ahead.



"Here's a cute, little story to make my point. You're on a coach in China, surrounded by jocular and flamboyant tourists. Suddenly there is a jolt, the coach stops suddenly and the Chinese driver looks irate. The attentive tourists notice that an elderly Chinese lady has been knocked over and is lying on the road. They exit the coach and begin to parlay with the distressed lady who is recovering from the shock. 'Here's my phrase book and let's apologise to her,' urges Doris from Barnsley. They whip through the phrase book and they cannot find the Mandarin for – *'We would like to apologise for this incident.'* The entire phrase book is focused on self-centred tourists who crave constant consumerist activity and apologising to locals is just not part of this egocentric and myopic lifestyle."

Ruth was now warming to my theme. "But that's awful. Surely saying 'I'm sorry' is part of life. It should be if we are Christians."

"I apologise unreservedly to you if this sounds bonkers, but boffins have also discovered that the only mention of 'religion' in MFL textbooks are horoscopes."

Ruth was shocked when I said this and remarked: "So these textbooks are presenting humans as either self-centred consumerists or pagan astrologers."

I decided to be blunt.

"*Oui, vous avez raison*." (French for Bang on the nail)

"So given all this, how can I serve Jesus as a French teacher?"

"Well a simple thing you can do is to tell your students stories about people who are busy loving their neighbours rather than scheming their next trip to Homebase. Consider this story."

"Neema Crafts is a faith-filled business that makes God smile. It started in 2003 when a Christian woman Susie Hart taught three deaf men to turn elephant poo into paper in a Tanzanian village. Neema now employs more than 100 deaf and disabled people who make handicrafts, cards, books and jewellery. The business is flourishing and has transformed the lives of many people who used to be snubbed, shunned and ignored in the village of Iringa.

Neema Crafts aims to change negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in the local society. There's a great stigma attached to having a disability in Tanzania, and Neema Crafts provides dignity and hope for many people who previously relied on street begging or were hidden away at home. The centre has eight craft workshop areas, a therapy unit for disabled children, an award-winning cafe, a conference centre entirely staffed by deaf people and a welcoming guesthouse jointly run by the local Mother's Union."

"That's an inspiring story, Rocky."

"Ruth, French teachers like you can serve God by challenging the consumerist faith in all kinds of creative and fun ways. You can talk about Neema in French. Tell the stories of ordinary people who really love their neighbours and shun the militant shopping gods."

"You could even do a lesson on William Tyndale and his admiration for godly cobblers!"

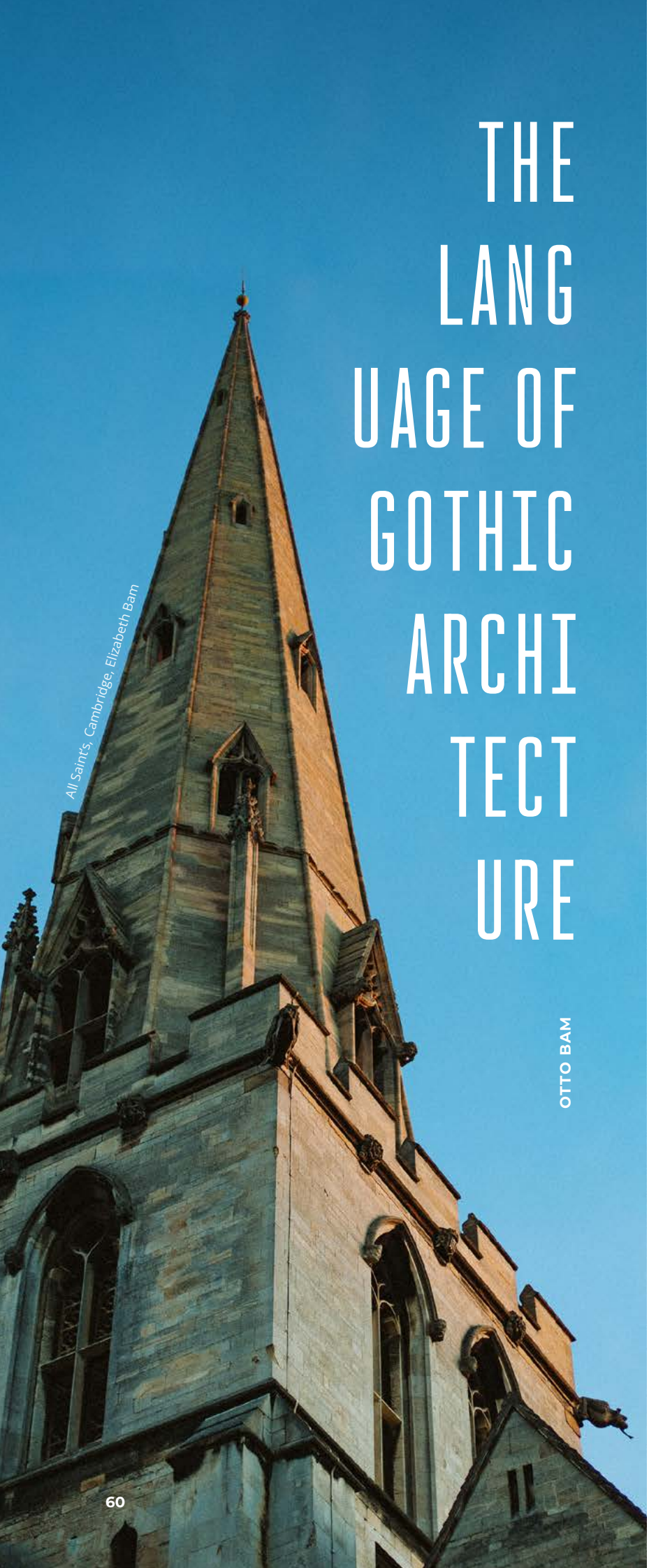
Ruth was now enjoying the conversation. However, she did mention with delightful irony that she had to dash off to Tesco to meet her husband, Brad!

She laughed and added cheekily: "*Tesco ergo sum.*"

Mark Roques taught Philosophy and Religious Education at Prior Park College, Bath, for many years. As Director of RealityBites he has developed a rich range of resources for youth workers and teachers. He has spoken at conferences in the UK, Holland, South Korea, Spain, Australia and New Zealand. This essay previously appeared in https://thinkfaith.net/2023/03/15/serving-god-as-cobblers-and-french-teachers/.

THE LANGUAGE OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

OTTO BAM



All Saint's, Cambridge, Elizabeth Bam

On a particularly grey and uncomfortably windy day in September I travelled to a little city in England called Peterborough to attend to the sort of administration that expats like myself are required to every so often. In a short exchange before the trip, an Englishman had me understand that Peterborough would not offer much to see and that I would be unlikely to find much that would attract the interest of a tourist. I took the train northward from Cambridge, still nurturing a hope of being surprised by what I would find, in defiance of the warnings of my local acquaintance.

A train station is the threshold between places. It is the foyer of every city, and the welcome you receive hints at what you can expect during your visit. I exited Peterborough's station into something like a cloud of grey weather. The route which is meant to be the prime artery for pedestrians journeying into the heart of the city appears to have been a city planner's afterthought. It crosses the four lanes of a busy road before winding around a parking garage of considerable size, an edifice characteristically void of discernible form. I eventually reached what I thought was the city's high street, owing to the buildings having a more inviting form, yet there was still an inexplicably pallid look about them. Few other pedestrians were about – despite it being mid-morning on a weekday. The upper story of the buildings to my left were lined with display windows which are now seemingly used as storage. A particularly dismal effect was caused by mannequins that had been left there in the windows, some standing, some lying abjectly on their sides, and which struck me as a symbol of indifference to the human form; a warning: here is a place where one day you might be dressed in the latest fashion and the next left lying naked in a window. I then passed the barriers

erected around a construction site, and behind it a rather attractive red-brick building. The building was being renovated into an apartment block, and the barriers advertised the attractions promised by the developer: “Gym. Concierge service. Weekly organised social events.”

But one attraction stood out as the most bizarre: “Cathedral Views.” Despite our society’s reluctance to *attend* churches, it seems that we nevertheless find the prospect of *looking* at them a luxury worth paying for (at least that is the wager made by the developer’s marketing department).

On my way back to the station I turned in at the road sign that pointed to the cathedral. As soon as I entered the grounds of the church I gasped involuntarily. Such must be the effect on anyone who upon leaving the grey of that city suddenly finds themselves confronted by the great cathedral rising up in front of them. Although it is partly built in the Norman style (predating the advent of Gothic architecture), its most striking and unique feature surely is its impressive Gothic facade, with its three enormous arches.

All over northern Europe and the United Kingdom, Gothic architecture continues to draw fascination. And this not merely because Gothic architecture tends to be tall and grand. It is also not merely because it tends to be old. It is, I think, mostly because it is strange. It addresses us in a unique language rarely heard in our largely secular cities. And if we incline our ears to the language of Gothic architecture, we might begin to understand its proclamation.

Gothic architecture has nothing to do with the ancient people group known as the Goths. The word Gothic was originally used as a slur, more or less meant to describe the architecture of the north as uncivilised and rude; much like we might nowadays use the word “barbarian.” The Gothic in architecture is characterised by any combination of features such as the proliferation of windows and relatively little wall space, high vaults, fantastical figures and shapes carved in stone, and an excess of ornamentation.

One of the defining impulses of Gothic architecture is its quest for verticality. The vaults of these cathedrals become higher and higher as the style develops from the 13th to the 16th centuries. More than merely resisting gravity, Gothic cathedrals must have seemed to those who lived during their emergence to exist within an inversion of the Newtonian universe. They signal the upward pull of a higher reality – a gravity as real and as insensible as the sun’s pull which keeps our planet in orbit. In the modern city we are overshadowed by skyscrapers that crowd us into immanence. These

Peterborough Cathedral, Otto Bam

Winchester Cathedral, Zoltan Tasi

Cologne Cathedral, Lucas Carl

Photo: Elizabeth Bam

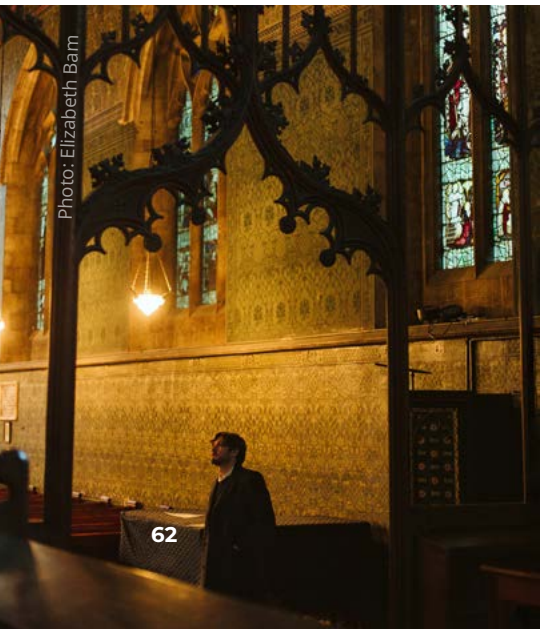


Photo: Elizabeth Bam

featureless edifices keep our eyes down, or fixed to billboards that sell us something, casting us yet again back to the imminent yet elusive lusts of consumerism. But in the midst of these cities, Gothic cathedrals point heavenwards, inviting us to lift our eyes, and perhaps to meet the bulging eyes of gargoyles – we find paradoxically something like kinship in these beasts because they are the handiwork of imaginations like our own. We are invited to participate imaginatively in the world of the building, to shuffle along the ledges where pigeons perch peacefully among the monsters that obediently fulfil their task of funnelling water. And we are invited to look higher still, to the spires and bell towers. And ultimately, to the heavens.

John Ruskin, in his essay "On Gothic Architecture" recently republished in a delightful Penguin Paperback,[1] helps us discover that the Christian proclamations of Gothic architecture are not only to be found in its outward form, but in the character of the society through which such a form comes into being. In his essay "On the Nature of the Gothic," Ruskin argues that the architectural forms of great civilisations reveal something about their view of humanity. Greek architecture, for example, with its demand to repeat perfect forms, makes of the workman a mere machine, who is not to employ any of his own creativity, but is expected to replicate perfect forms perfectly. In Gothic architecture, in contrast, the workman is given the freedom to create imperfect forms that proceed from his own initiative and creativity. The savageness denoted by the epithet "Gothic," argues Ruskin, points to the fact that Gothic architecture gives a freedom to the workman to employ his own intellect and creativity, however clumsy the result. So too is the changefulness of Gothic architecture, its refusal to simply repeat particular forms, a reflection of the affirmation of the creativity of every person.

Ruskin's argument does not only pertain to architecture but is also a call to live creatively in light of the Christian message. To do so, Ruskin insists, we must not only make room for imperfection but expect it. He writes, "neither architecture nor any other noble work of man can be good unless it be imperfect."[2]

"NEITHER ARCHITECTURE NOR ANY OTHER NOBLE WORK OF MAN CAN BE GOOD UNLESS IT BE IMPERFECT."

JOHN RUSKIN

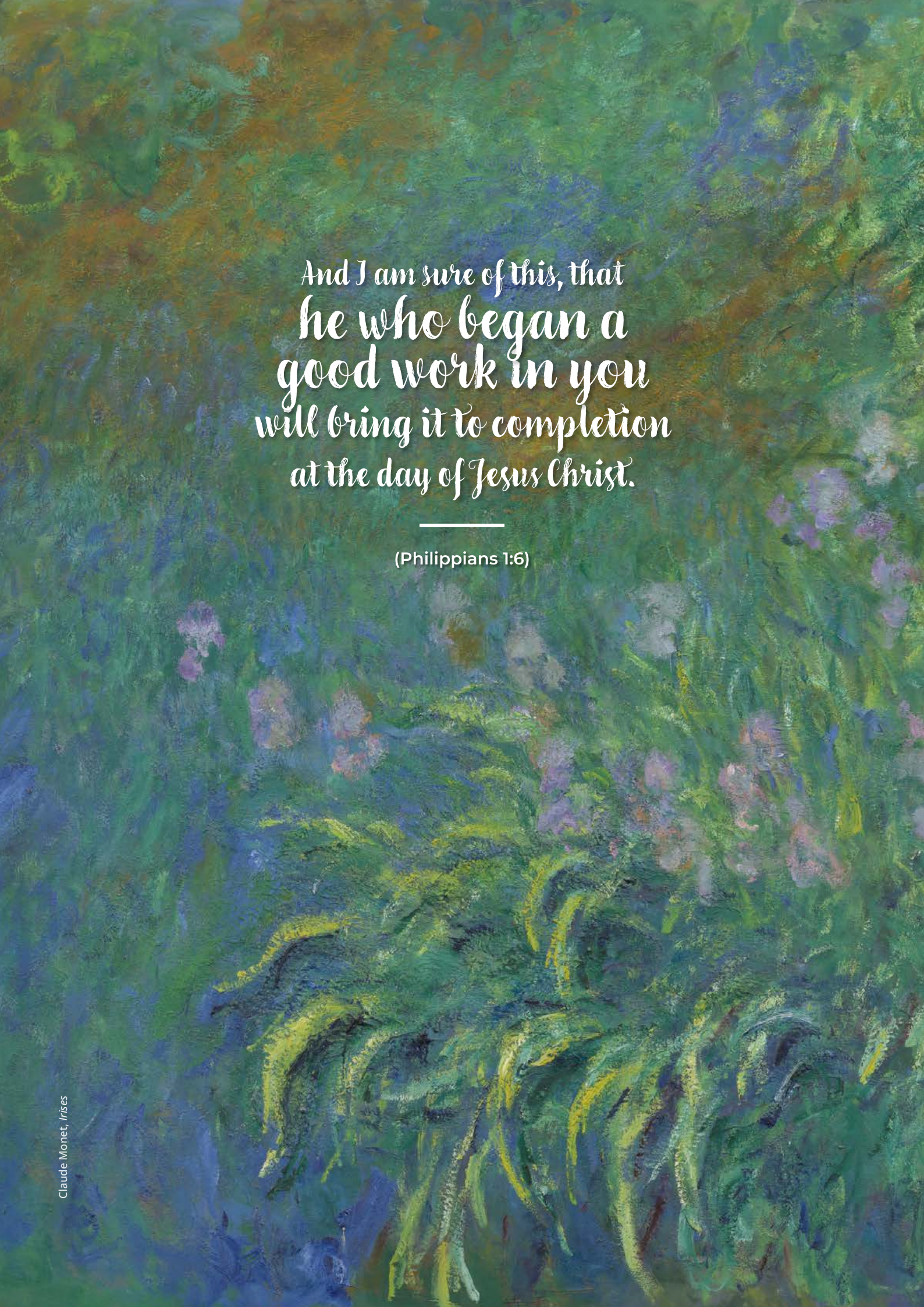
I now live in Jesus Lane in Cambridge. When I walk out my door I am greeted by the sight of All Saints Church. The church is a prime example of the Gothic revival of the 19th century. The walls inside of the church brim with beautiful patterns and floral forms. In the late-afternoon, when I look up from the cold, wintry streets, and see the steeple ablaze with fiery afternoon sun, I am reminded to resist the spirit of the age – its mediocre perfectionism, its carbon-copy consumerism. I am reminded to resist my own perfectionism, which is at odds with the aims of art, and instead to respond to what Ruskin writes is the exhortation "to every spirit which Christianity summons to her service": "do what you can, and confess frankly what you are unable to do; neither let your effort be shortened for fear of failure, nor your confession silenced for fear of shame."[3] This is to learn the language of Gothic architecture.

Otto Bam is the Arts Manager for the KLC, the editor of the English side of artway.eu and an Associate Fellow of the KLC.

1 John Ruskin, *On Art and Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

2 Ruskin, *On Art and Life*, 27.

3 Ruskin, *On Art and Life*, 12.



Claude Monet, *Irises*

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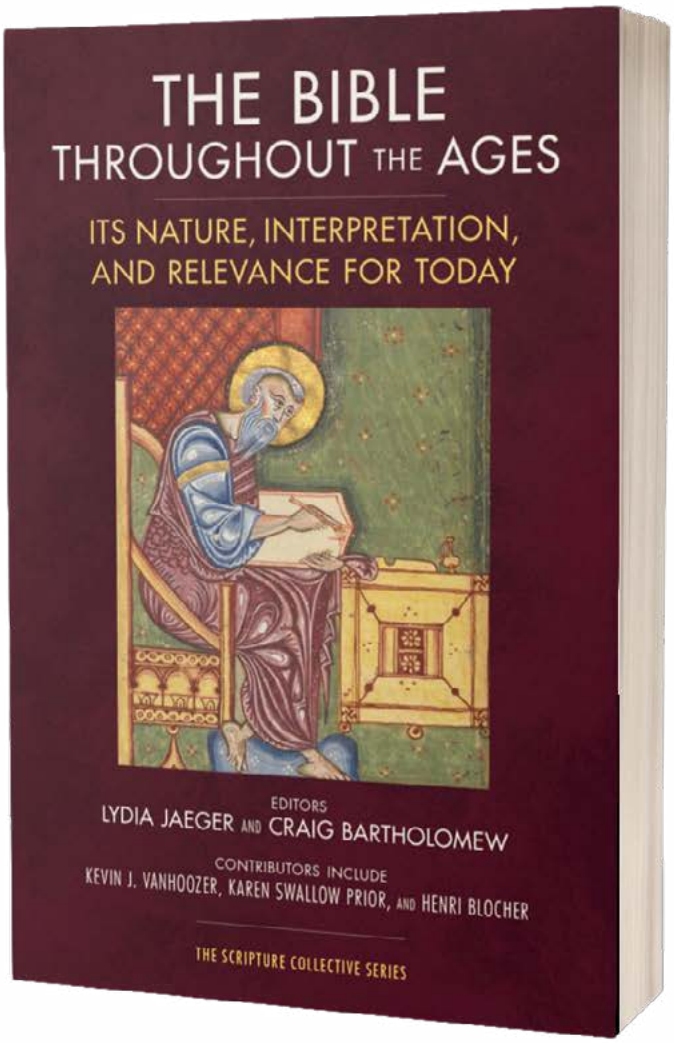

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