ON THE ROAD

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the arts

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Cover: Corey Biscoe-Marwick

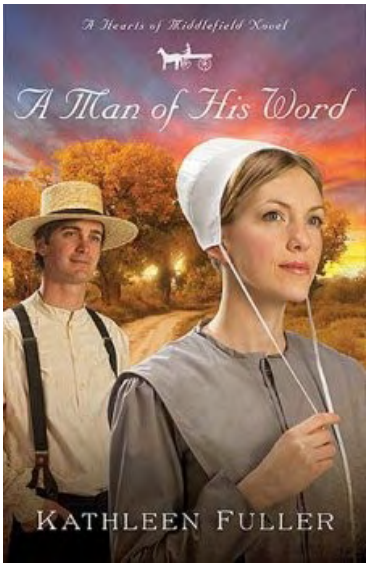
From the Editor

Nathan Hobby

Amish historical romance fiction is a large industry in recent times; you can probably find a shelf of it at your local Christian bookstore. Yet despite being the best known connection between Anabaptism and the arts, it doesn't get a mention in the rest of this issue.

What does get mentioned are many art forms —music, visual art, literature and performance. I hope you're inspired to either create or appreciate more art.

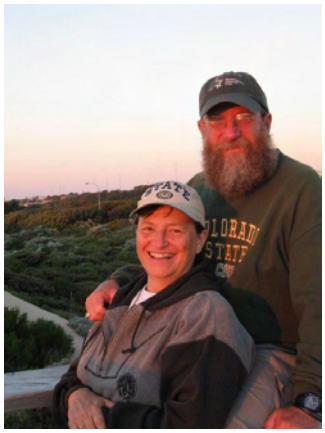
I'm a writer myself, and I want to acknowledge the important encouragement *Studio: a Journal of Christians Writing* has been to me for all of my writing life. It's been published faithfully since 1980 by Paul Grover from Albury, NSW. It's generous in its interpretation of 'Christian' and of 'writing' and a good place to read what other Christians are writing. You can find out how to subscribe or contribute at http://web.me.com/pdgrover/StudioJournal/. *Studio* might even consider Amish fiction, if it's well written.



The view from Ephesians 4

'To prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service'

Mark and Mary Hurst, AAANZ staffworkers



A news release from Mennonite Central Committee states, "Ongoing conversation seeks to tear down walls, build relationships." The article is about conversations between Shi'a Muslim scholars from the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran and Mennonite scholars from Canada and the U.S.

"These dialogues provide a safe place for academics and theologians to speak frankly about their beliefs without ignoring important differences…The primary goal is fostering dialogue and improving understanding, not finding consensus or agreement. Islam is Islam and the gospel is the gospel, they are not the same. The goal is to understand each other's faith and to bear witness to our own faith."

Tearing down walls and building relationships are key aspects of Christian discipleship. Educating ourselves about others is the first step, particularly those seen as enemies. In our current setting Islam is being portrayed as a violent religion that is a threat to Christianity and Western culture (as if Christianity and Western culture are without their own problems with violence).

Some recent books help tear down walls of ignorance that keep Christians and Muslims apart. Four that we found helpful are described below.

- ***Allah, A Christian Response***, by Miroslav Volf (Harper One, 2011) deals with the provocative question "Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?" Agree with him or not, Volf does a good job of raising important questions for peacemakers to deal with if we are going to build interfaith relationships.
- Amitabh Pal's ***"Islam" Means Peace: Understanding the Muslim Principle of Nonviolence Today*** (Praeger, 2011) goes a long way toward demolishing the argument that Islam is a violent religion. Stories of Islamic peacemakers are told and verses from the Qur'an are explained in a helpful way for a non-Muslim public.
- Reading personal stories of peacebuilding give encouragement to the rest of us to keep tearing down walls and building relationships. ***Teatime in Mogadishu: My Journey as a Peace Ambassador in the World of Islam***, by Ahmed Ali Haile (Herald Press, 2011) tells the costly story of peacebuilding in Somalia. Ahmed Ali Haile grew up as a Muslim, became a Christian, and committed himself to bringing peace in his homeland. Despite losing a leg to a grenade, Haile persisted to put himself between warring tribesmen in his peacebuilding mission.
- ***I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey On The Road To Peace And Human Dignity*** (Walker & Company, 2011) is Izzeldin Abuelaish's moving account of peacemaking in Israel/Palestine. After losing three daughters and a niece to an Israeli bomb, Abuelaish refused to demonise all Israelis and let hate rule his life. His story is another powerful Islamic peacemaking story.

What walls need demolishing where you are? With whom do you need to build a relationship? Read, educate yourself, and get involved. Stretch your faith as you get to know others outside of your current comfort zone. Who knows what God has in store for you? Maybe you will author your own book of self-discovery.

Anabaptism and the arts: a good mix?

President's Report

Doug Sewell, AAANZ President

This edition of *On the Road* is about the arts. The power of art is its ability to express the depths of our human condition, both its beauty and its ugliness and the intermingling of the sacred with the profane.

I am perplexed that the Anabaptists of the Reformation did not express themselves more through art. Correct me please, but I don't know of any Anabaptists who are known for their art. The *Martyrs Mirror* is a horrific pictorial journal of persecution, like a war photographer's album, but it is not art.

The first Anabaptists were a counter cultural movement but did that mean they were opposed to culture and the arts as such? Were the Anabaptists puritans and iconoclasts of the same bent as the religious fundamentalists who regard artistic expression as idolatry? I think not. Were they too occupied either with their mission or escaping the onslaught of their oppressors to have time to ponder art? Or in the midst of the peasant revolt were they too poor to afford the so-called luxury of art?

The Anabaptists were passionate followers of Jesus and it goes without saying that good art is borne from life experience. So where is their expression of conversion and discipleship, of peace and protest, and of joy and lament conveyed in art?

I suspect one reason for the apparent lack of art was at that time when the written word was popularised through the invention of the printing press, the fine arts were not valued in the same way as words were. The pre-eminence given to the scriptures and the rhetoric of the preacher are an-ongoing legacy of the Reformation, even to this day in conservative Protestantism.

Art goes well beyond mere words. Words are limited by the boundaries of language. Powerful art expands the breadth of our human experience and can provide a window to the artist's personal world and worldview.

Art, drama, music and poetry can express the pathos of our humanity in a similar way to which the words of the prophet speak of the empathy and pathos of the divine. Pathos is an existential quality which as an experience or a work of art arouses deep feelings of pity, empathy, tenderness, or sorrow. Just as a prophet speaks to a particular time and place, art is also about time and place.

From the primitive cave paintings that told about the dreamtime or the drama of the hunt, through the classical portrayal of the ideal and medieval art that retold the Biblical narrative to the Renaissance which defined perspective and the human form, and all the way to blurred Impressionism, art describes in one way or another the human story and our relationship to the world. The relatively modern view that art is for art's sake alone is not the case for most people. Modern art is more about the existential dilemma, the mystery and formlessness. Postmodernism tells an entirely different story. Art can speak about the deconstructed ground of being from which the artist draws inspiration. This can be a mirror of the same raw dust, which the master artist engaged with to mould and twist the work of creation and the infinity of space.

Francis Schaeffer of L'Abri in Switzerland suggested as Christians why we know a work of art has value, because art is a work of creativity, and creativity has value because God is the Creator and an art work has value as a creation because human beings are made in the image of God, and therefore we not only can love and feel emotion, but we also have the capacity to create.

I would like to see more art inspired by the Anabaptist journey of transformation and reconciliation and the hope that it speaks to our humanity. Don't just paint pictures or write poetry about Jesus on a cross but rather the cross that you carry and the story that you bear. Enjoy and let this edition of *On the Road* stir up the dust like music beneath your feet.

Tim James

Reading the Scriptures as scripts

by Jeanette Mathews

Performance criticism is a newly emerging discipline in biblical studies. Over recent decades an appreciation for the nature of biblical books as literature has been influential, which has expanded historical-critical approaches to the Bible to include literary approaches such as narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism. Even more recently there has been a resurgence in the notion that for the majority of history practically all biblical literature has been orally transmitted – a fact that has been largely overlooked in our age where written Bibles are commonplace and the predominant method of accessing the Bible is by silent individualised reading. In other words, most of the biblical genres had their origin in public, spoken events, such as stories told around a campfire, public readings of law codes or community reception of epistles. Clearly, then, transmission of the Bible originally and historically involved a performer and an audience. The aims of performance criticism are to highlight features that are unique to live performance and to recover what might have been lost when orally delivered material was committed to writing and transmitted as a static medium.

We have long been aware of the way that our biblical texts have been shaped by their original settings. A focus on their transmission as a performance is a further reminder that each oral event had a physical location and a particular socio-historical circumstance. The same text may have been performed quite differently in different locations. I find it helpful to think of the delivery of one of Paul's letters as it circulated around early church communities in the Greco-Roman world. What might have been emphasised in one location may not have been as relevant in another. The way the audience responded could have influenced the delivery. Clarification about some point in the letter may have been required. All

of these examples suggest that oral delivery of an epistle would be a very different experience to the way it is received as a canonical written text.

As we come to interpret biblical texts today, attending to *performance* as a contributing factor in the meaning and reception of these texts will affect the way we understand them. The holistic and communal nature of performance encourages a focus not just on *what* is being communicated, but *how* it is being communicated. Can we imagine fully appreciating a piece of music by merely studying the score? Not only does the music become "realised" in performance; each new performance of it will have unique features, owing to different musicians, different settings, perhaps different instruments and differing interpretations of the composer's intention. In a similar fashion, biblical critics need to give attention to the nature of the *performance* of texts, both in ancient and in modern settings, since they were originally composed for oral communication.

Attending to the performance of a text highlights many extra-textual features that are not present in a static written text. These include the following visual and auditory cues:

- Gestures, facial expressions, pace of delivery including pauses, pitch, volume, posture, body language, etc. to fill in "gaps" in the text.
- Use of tone to convey the subtext (eg humour, sarcasm, exasperation, inquiry).
- The representation of different characters in a text by different voices or tones of voice.

In addition to these extra-textual features, experiencing a text in performance gives a new appreciation for compositional issues such as the following:

- Each text has a temporal sequence so that the audience hears a cumulative presentation. The performer is more aware of what is building on the past, when a new issue is being introduced, how an earlier part prepares for a later part, how a later part clarifies an earlier part, and so on.
- Repetition is often present in a text for rhetorical effect and can be effectively conveyed to the audience by a performer, for example through delivering similar material at the same place on a stage.
- Emotions expressed in a text such as amazement, fear, horror, puzzlement, anguish, grief, frustration, anger and joy can be effectively portrayed through performance. An audience is likely to have a greater affective response to enacted emotion than written accounts of emotion.
- The humour of the text can be more effectively brought out in performance, especially due to the frequently infectious engagement between performer and audience.
- Silence in performance is especially effective and would frequently be missed without a consciousness of performance. The Masoretes, the early transmitters of the ancient Hebrew text, created written symbols for places where silence should be held when reading the text. One example is at the moment between Genesis 22:10 and Genesis 22:11 – the moment between Abraham taking the knife to kill his son and hearing the voice of the angel telling him not to do it. How much more powerful would that moment be if silence was included in its performance?

Even in our translations we can sometimes see "stage-instructions" built into the text, so that props, costuming and gestures are obvious. More often, however, the way the text is to be performed is a matter of interpretation. Performing canonical scripture requires both respect for the original script *and* preparedness for the dynamism of performance driven by ever-changing settings, actors and audiences. Not all "performances" of biblical texts are able to maintain this balance and will be better understood as adaptations than versions of the text. When re-enacted through drama or film, for example, biblical stories can gain a new resonance for audiences but will often result in an extensive departure from the text due to script-writing and directorial choices.

Many of us will be familiar with examples of canonical scripture being performed. The Biblical Storytellers Association has had an impact on churches in Australia and as a result congregations and individuals have often had an experience of hearing biblical passages or even entire books being recited rather than read as part of worship. It is not surprising that audiences of such experiences report the texts "coming alive" or "being heard as if for the first time" given that a "performance" of a text inherently reproduces many of the features of oral delivery described above. These features are much less obvious in traditional Bible readings from a lectern and almost absent in silent reading.

Some groups are experimenting with the performance of texts as they stand, and discovering that many of the biblical stories are quite sophisticated and entertaining dramas. One such group is the US based "Ancient Hebrew Drama Project" under the direction

of Jeff Barker, predominantly a theatre scholar, but one working closely with Old Testament scholars such as Tom Boomershine, bringing Old Testament stories to life and revealing their beauty and truth by performing them as scripts.

Other scholars are examining biblical texts for intrinsic performative features, seeking not so much to imagine how biblical texts might have looked as dramas but seeking to discover the influence drama might have had on the composition of biblical texts. Dramatic features such as characterisation, dialogue, stage direction, scene design and so forth can be found within the texts already, and can influence the way we interpret them. If biblical texts could be understood as "scripts," we would be less likely to view them as deposits of propositional ideas that form doctrine, but rather consider ourselves an audience that is ready to be drawn into the drama and re-enact it in our own settings and for our own time. I have recently analysed the book of Habakkuk in this way, discovering the intrinsic performative features of the text that highlight its drama, influence its interpretation and model the prophet's faithfulness in the midst of crisis that can serve as a model for our re-enactment (see my forthcoming volume, *A Commentary of Habakkuk: Faithful Performance in the Midst of Crisis*).

Adherents of "biblical performance criticism," therefore, are moving in both practical and theoretical directions. Both approaches are found on www.biblicalperformancecriticism.org, a website that emerged from a section of the Society of Biblical Literature focussed on "The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media" and more recently "Performance Criticism of Biblical and Other Ancient Texts," where links may be found to the "Network of Biblical Storytellers" and other similar lay networks as well as to scholarly publications.

The term "performance" implies repetition of texts at new times and in new settings. Performers, after all, rehearse their acts and often present a season of performances which are repeated night after night. Nonetheless, repetition does not mean that small changes will not occur in each new performance, since performers, audiences and settings all have potential to change over time. Scripture remains a "living" force because it is continually set in new locations with new audiences and we should therefore expect new interpretations to emerge as we re-read it for our time and setting.

One aspect of performance that has interested me a great deal in relation to studying biblical texts is improvisation. In performance, improvisation respects and builds on a tradition but allows a new situation to create new possibilities. Performers who improvise draw on a repertoire of established formulas and themes that come "ready-made" to them, but by using these ready-mades in new settings they may alter their meaning in ways that surprise and challenge their audience's expectations. We can see such activity within scripture itself, such as when a prophet takes an established theme and gives it new meaning. Think of the theme of covenant, for example, and the way Jeremiah used it in Jer 31:34, or the concept of the prophetic spirit that would be poured out on *all* flesh as described in Joel 2:28-29.

Throughout this discussion I have been referring to "performers" and "audience," signifying that a critical feature of performance is embodiment. When scriptures are performed they are no longer abstract artefacts but are fleshed out in real communities of faith. This observation is consistent with our understanding of scripture as texts imbued with the spirit of the living God that have the potential to transform the individual believer, the faithful community and the wider world. Approaching biblical texts as scripts ready to be performed compels us to become actors, re-enacting them for our own time and place.

Poems by Melissa Weaver

Mosaic Maker

The mosaic maker stands
in piles of stained-glass shrapnel,
sifting through verbs and nouns
with bloodied fingers.

She struggles to find places for
stillborn
starvation
minefields
fault-lines
midnight-hued -cides and
sold

She seeks a strong cement
and strains to see the Pattern
in which all things (hard beauty)
hold together.

Symphony: An Introduction

I am not quite sure what movement we're in.

The bows seem to be moving faster,
raking my pulse across dark strings.
Dissonance seems to dissolve what's left of a melody
I am not quite sure we've learned.

Yet, some of the saddest strains seem familiar:
Ancient moans of cellos fainting against knees,
Reeds weeping along souls grown deep like the rivers,
Cycles of notes we are trusting to not climax in chaos.

Ancient or further decay, death-tones color each interlude
and leave me straining to hear sounds that one day will swell.

I am not quite sure what movement we're in.

The Composer is famous for arrangements not expected.
I know there *was* a measure by which we measure history.
I know there *will be* a day when chords will break every cord.
I know we wait:
somewhere, suspended, in that second day.

So, I am not quite sure what movement we're in.

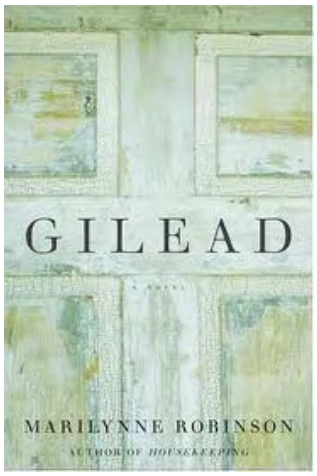
The bows seem to be moving faster,
but it matters less and less:

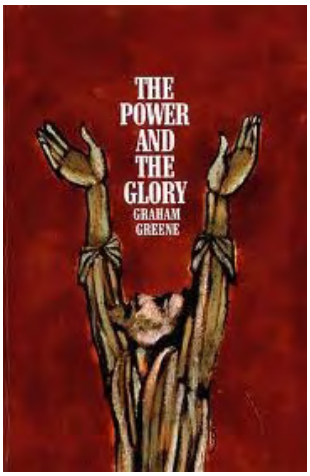
I am invited to enter a symphony where
a still, small Story exists amidst minor keys.

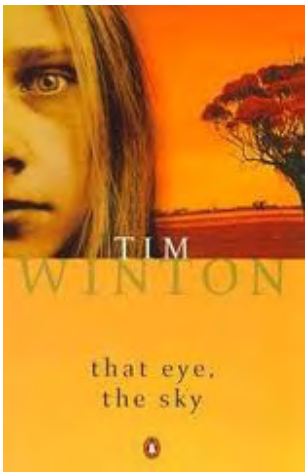
I scratch to tap its melody
on the breadth of my out-of-tune days.

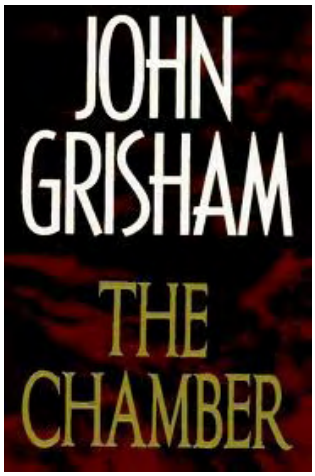
Writing novels for the kingdom

Nathan Hobby









The original version of this paper was presented at the Newbigin Group, 29 June 2009 and an abridged version published by Evangelical Alliance in 2009. This version has been revised for On the Road.

> It might be much more appropriate to go off and write a novel (and not a 'Christian' novel where half the characters are Christians and all the other half become Christians on the last page) but a novel which grips people with the structure of Christian thought, and with Christian motivation set deep into the heart and structure of the narrative, so that people would read that and resonate with it and realize that that story can be my story.
>
> - N.T. Wright, "How can the Bible be authoritative?"

The kingdom novel is an elusive, mythical creature. We're not even sure if we have any living specimens. We *do* have some prescriptions for what it should look like, and rumours of sightings. At times, I've attempted to create one; in fact sometimes it's what I'd like to do more than anything. But my story is just as much about my falling short of it, of stillbirths and my retreat from the attempt.

My exploration here has three sections - firstly, an overview of the idea of a Christian novel. Secondly, an account of my writing career from a faith perspective. Thirdly, an investigation of the framework of building for the kingdom suggested by Tom Wright in *Surprised By Hope* (2008).

1. The Christian Novel

Wright's quote which I started with sat above my writing desk for a long time. Since I first read it eight years ago, it has been one of the goals of my novel writing. It's a tantalising glimpse of what a Christian novel should look like. I don't think we've seen many which match the brief, but I'd love to write one of the first.

One of the problems is that most evangelicals who write novels write inferior popular fiction, romance, science fiction or thriller, usually promulgating popular piety. It's rare to find any fiction on the shelves of Koorong with profound spirituality or reflecting a thoughtful theology. I'm not a fan of secular popular fiction; evangelical fiction is much the same only with even worse writing and bad theology.

Some theologians have used the novel form to get their message across, and we do at least get better theology from them. Brian McLaren wrote *A New Kind of Christian* and its two sequels; the theology is good, or at least I generally like it, but as a novel it's poor. It is dominated by slabs of dialogue which put ideas in characters' mouths; the descriptive interruptions feel like filler. The plot, characterisation and prose are all uncompelling. It seems to work for a lot of people, at least for getting across ideas in an accessible way, but it's not the novel Wright is describing. Paul Wallis, who lives in Canberra, has done a better job in his 2008 novel, *The New Monastic*.

There are some good literary novelists who have Christian faith, but they are usually much better writers than Christians. We might think of Graham Greene (1904-1991), whose work often reflected Christian concerns, but who struggled to even believe in God's existence. He wrote what many regard as one of the great Christian novels, *The Power and the Glory*, following the fugitive whisky priest travelling illegally around a South American republic, administering the sacraments and comforting the people while trying to escape the police and struggling with his own sins. But a polemical biography I read paints his faith as a cynical veneer (Shelden, 1992). Adultery seems to have been one of his lifelong hobbies and it's also a preoccupation of his writing.

Adultery was also a preoccupation of the other great 20th century Christian novelist, John Updike (1932-2009). He wrote beautifully and his short story "The Christian Room-mates" is one of the best pieces of Christian literature I've read. He might best be described as a moderate Episcopalian who acknowledged the limits of theological liberalism and admired Barth and Kierkegaard. But his Christian themes, whether liberal or not, feel, in the end like the subset of a warm humanism. He is one of the greatest postwar American novelists, but he never wrote the sort of novel Wright was imagining.

Closer to home, we have Tim Winton (1960-), one of Australia's most important novelists. He was brought up a fundamentalist in the Church of Christ, but as a teenager read John Yoder and Jim Wallis, who influenced him to a social justice faith. On the face of it, this is extremely promising. Perhaps his most explicitly Christian book is *That Eye, The Sky*, published in 1986. It manages to mix credulity with scepticism, as an itinerant preacher brings Jesus into the lives of a rural family only for them to discover that Jesus is not easily found at their local churches. It's an early work; the fistful of brilliant novels he has published since 1992 when *Cloudstreet* came out are better works of art, and far less explicitly Christian.

Instead, faith in Winton's later writing is more of a subterranean mood. His writings are often described as 'spiritual' - the transformative experience of the boys surfing in *Breath* or the significance of the Swan River to the characters in *Cloudstreet*. Lisa Jacobson writes:

Winton's writing is infused with his Christian faith, although he is not so much a Christian writer, as a Christian who writes. *Dirt Music* nevertheless reflects his spiritual worldview, and the novel is imbued with biblical language.

Perhaps in reaction to evangelical fiction, Jacobson and others seem glad that the Christianity in Winton's fiction remains implicit and mystical. Winton's achievements are significant, and we should be grateful that one of Australia's greatest novelists writes out of a Christian orientation. Yet his writing only goes a little of the way toward what Wright is hoping for. What his work doesn't have - or Updike's or Greene's - is a Christian community.

The finest kingdom novels I have read are the companion pieces by Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (2004) and *Home* (2008), both of which come closer to depicting a Christian community in action in small town America in the 1950s. They are wise and beautiful novels which 'grip the reader with the structure of Christian thought.' *Gilead* is a testimony of grace and faith as an old preacher named Ames looks back on the life he has lived and hopes for the future of his young son. *Home* is set in the same town at the same time in the family of Ames' best friend, Boughton, and retells the parable of the prodigal son—except that in real life, no father can love completely unconditionally, or at least not completely the understand the troubles of his wayward son. Robinson has written two stories saturated in Christianity, and yet won the acclaim of the secular literary establishment – all on the strength of her beautiful, profound writing.

2. My writing

I started my first novel, *The Fur*, at the end of year twelve. As much as it had a science-fiction setting, for the first time I was consciously writing from experience and about this world. It's the story of three years in the life of Michael Sullivan. He's a teenager growing up fundamentalist in a Western Australia afflicted by a plague of fungus, the fur, for over thirty years. The state is cut off from the rest of the world. When the fur kills his mum, he's forced to live more deeply, torn between staying to fight the fur and escaping to the east with his friend Rebecca. Michael goes on to study theology at university, and the pastor at his new church stretches his faith and his mind with some of the theological transformation I underwent at university.

The Fur won the T.A.G. Hungerford award for an unpublished manuscript, and part of the prize was publication. After its success, I thought I was invincible. Now that I'd done it once, I thought I could write about theological and political themes and more success would come easily. This is one reason I've struggled so much since.

I have been working on my second novel, *The House of Zealots* since 2002, through eleven drafts. For much of

that time, I was *too* conscious of my theological duties as a novelist. I could have given you a much more coherent, faithful account of the novelist's task of writing for the kingdom a few years ago, because back then I put it above everything else. I was so worried about ideas that I lost sight of art. I feel I've finally overcome that struggle and written a novel that works, but it took me much longer than it should have. It involved, in the end, years of paring, cutting and rewriting.

A good case study of my struggle is the changes that have taken place in the main character, Phoebe Gallagher. She's a shy, compassionate twenty-two year old student trying to live with integrity in two worlds - the suburban world of her family and the activist world of her housemates. In my first drafts, I was attempting to create an anonymous Christian, a character with many of the values and actions of Jesus, yet without a conscious faith.

But I decided her anonymous Christianity wasn't enough for me. I wanted to convey more than compassion and a sense of spirituality in her. The type of ideas I wanted to explore through her were more complicated, and all involved an explicit faith. I made her a mouthpiece for my theology, and it was a disaster. I was writing this shy girl who never says what she thinks and is meant to be on a journey of discovery. And yet my wife, Nicole, had to point out that in the opening pages, Phoebe was already expounding a fully-formed theology, the sort of ideas that I should have been showing her developing through the whole of the novel. In fact, they were the sort of ideas I could never just write down, but needed to find some way to narrativise.

I pared her theologising right back. Now my message is less clear. Indeed, it's no longer a message so much as a story. Instead of declaring to her housemates that she thinks working for justice is as much about spending time with crazy people and poor people as protesting, now there are scenes with her doing this and never declaring it.

3. Building for the kingdom: a consideration of the framework

In *Surprised By Hope*, Tom Wright lays out an eschatology focused on the bodily resurrection of Christ as the firstfruits of God's renewal of creation, culminating in our bodily resurrection and the renewal of all creation. He argues against a disembodied spiritual existence in heaven after we die. Instead, he argues for a continuity between what we are doing now as the people of God living in the kingdom, and the form of the world after the renewal of all creation.

Thus in the chapter "Building for the Kingdom" (218 -244), he builds on St Paul's idea that 'our labours in Christ are not in vain' (1 Cor 15:58) to argue that everything done for God will become a part of God's new creation. He believes that we have tasks to do for the kingdom here and now, which will ultimately form part of the new creation in a way we can only glimpse at the moment.

The three aspects of this that he discusses are justice, beauty and evangelism. He talks about justice in terms of the setting right of the world as a sign and symbol of what's to come. He talks about beauty in terms of us creating things that reflect simultaneously the beauty of the original creation, the scars of a fallen world and the hope of the new creation. Evangelism, then, is the invitation for others to join in the kingdom life, and it needs to reflect the kingdom focus and hope for renewal of the Earth.

1. Worship and Community

Ian Watt (1957) argues convincingly that the rise of the novel is tied to the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment gave us the sense of the individual which enabled writers to create characters with particular histories and psychologies, rather than universal archetypes. It also gave us the sense of causation and linear, consistent time which were crucial to the novel and its early realism. This heritage is one reason why the novel tends toward individualism in its form and themes, a tendency which works against community.

As well as this, there's the simple fact that writing and reading are very solitary practices. I don't think that's something we can or should try to get around. (However, Rory Shiner (ca. 2005) makes the important point that 'unlike the romantic vision of the artist as solitary and unaccountable, the Christian writer remains a worker. He or she continues to function in community, and is therefore under all the obligations of his or her relationship—whether that be to family, church, publisher or reader.') There is value in reading groups and in writing groups; indeed, I think we need to get better as a church at talking about books. For some of us, books can change our lives, but I've rarely witnessed them discussed effectively or eloquently. I fear that reading is too private an experience to share, but sometimes I'm proved wrong and it heartens me. Still, despite writing and reading having some opportunity for community, in the end, you have to sit down by yourself to read and write. It's why many readers and writers are introverts.

Yet novels need to do better at *depicting* community, particularly the Christian community. I mentioned it earlier as a fault in the Christian writers I surveyed - they write about the individual Christian struggling with conscience and existence, but not about the Christian community. (This is a product of the kind of individualistic Christianity which was ascendant in the twentieth century in both liberalism and evangelicalism.) I have tried to write about the Christian community. It's not easy. Even if you do it well, it probably won't sell and no-one will want to publish what you've written.

In 2004, I began a sequel to *The Fur*. It's called *Narrow is the Path* and it's about the life of Michael's church. In fact, it's an attempt to novelise Yoder's *Body Politics*. In the midst of much conflict, the church lives out the common meal, the bringing together of different races and classes, confession and discernment, and the giftedness of all the members. In the end, the church splits over the issue of conscription as conflict worsens in Western Australia, and the radicals are forced into hiding in the hills.

I worked on it off and on for four years. The attempt failed because I was more worried about theology than literature. It could interest the few people who are interested by the clash of theological ideas in a fictional form. But it wouldn't interest adults who buy novels or the teenagers who read *The Fur*.

Maybe I did better in *House of Zealots*, but I spent much longer on that. Phoebe gets involved with the Christian Centre for Social Action in East Victoria Park, a community of sorts among the mentally ill. Leo starts living with Melchizidek's homeless collective, a group of homeless Christians who take over squats, living from dumpster diving and worshipping together each evening. I'm amazed that none of the non-Christian readers who have read the manuscript have complained about these two communities. I'm hoping this is because I've represented them convincingly.

2. Beauty

I felt challenged and inspired by Wright's explanation of beauty as an aspect of building for the kingdom. The challenge of creating something beautiful is one that I want to take to *The Library of Babel*.

In the past, I haven't seen my writing through this frame. In reaction to being brought up to like things being 'nice' - nice like *The Sound of Music* - I spent my late teens and early twenties seeking out art which wasn't 'nice'. I came to value transgression and shock too much. At the moment, I'm developing a more nuanced view.

Wright's explanation of beauty is quite specific; it's not a general notion of things which are simply 'aesthetically pleasing':

When art comes to terms with both the wounds of the world and the promise of resurrection, and learns how to express and respond to both at once, we will be on the way to a fresh vision, a fresh mission.

This is not how I usually think of 'beauty' in fiction. I find beauty in elegant prose. In insight into a state of being, a feeling, a sight, that no-one else has ever put their finger on before. (I believe this is one of the greatest pleasures novels can offer.) And when a mood, a place or a season is brilliantly evoked.

Some of the writing I rate most beautiful is written by atheists like Ian McEwan and John Fowles or at least non-Christians like Paul Auster, James Joyce, Lionel Shriver. It's hard to know how to know what Wright would make of this 'beauty'. Does Paul's claim which Wright depends so heavily on - 'because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain' (1 Cor 15:58) - extend to them and their creation of beauty?

If we take Wright's image of the master architect (God) taking all the different pieces of the castle that his workers (humans) are making and combining them in a way that no-one could foresee, we would hardly want to say the architect isn't *allowed* to take pieces from workers who were working for someone else. But then nor would we want to guess what the master architect would do, nor hang too much either on Wright's metaphor or on a single verse from 1 Corinthians.

How might *beauty in fiction* be transformed by the practices of the Christian community? There is an obvious and trite answer - for a start, the upside down values of the kingdom challenge the world's idea of beauty attached to slim, young models. We might also strain ourselves and insist that prose is more 'beautiful' when it describes a world of God's presence, rather than one of his non-existence.

Perhaps in the diversity of the body - the breaking down of racial barriers in the church as a proclamation of Christ's victory over the powers - we might also be encouraged to find beauty outside our cultural comfort zone. I'm not very good at this. You've no doubt placed a black mark against my name for the number of white English speaking males I've used as examples. They're who I tend to read.

Wright's comments about beauty could be unpacked at much greater length. The relevance for my writing is to make sure I remember the importance of beauty, and not get trapped in describing only the bizarre or transgressive. The challenge is to find hints of hope in my writing which echo the hope of resurrection and

new creation Wright lays out in *Surprised by Hope*. The encouragement is to conceive of my writing as an act of creation that can please God and can be a part of building for the kingdom.

3. Justice

Can novels bring justice? I don't know. There have been some writers who have had a justice impact on me. Strangely enough, the one who comes to mind most strongly is John Grisham, a popular fiction writer I don't admit to liking. When I was a teenager reading him, his novel *The Chamber* turned me against capital punishment. It was an amazing transformation. Up until I read that novel at sixteen, I thought capital punishment was a good thing. After I read it, I saw it as an evil thing, a perpetuation of violence. It was because Grisham engaged my sympathy so well with a death row inmate I cared about and gave me a sense of the injustice involved in execution which no simple opinion piece could give me.

4. Evangelism

I don't feel the need to be aware of evangelism as a separate aspect of my writing. If my novel shows the Christian narrative plausibly, then potentially people will see good news in it.

Of course, this is no easy task. Unless a novelist can transform and transcend some of the limits and conventions of the novel, the goods news he or she writes about is not going to be the big picture, kingdom news that Wright talks about. The focus on the individual and the individual's consciousness pushes the novel toward individualism and mere spirituality. Again, it's the challenge of representing the Christian in community.

But evangelism brings together all the aspects of writing for the kingdom. The novel truest to a kingdom vision of the gospel as laid out by Wright would show the community of God's people existing, and in their own imperfect way, incarnating the gospel in the world. It would be a novel of beauty, that captures the wonder of God's creation, the devastation of sin and the hope of new creation in exquisite prose, full of startling insight into what it is to be alive.

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Rembrandt and the Mennonites

There may be an important exception to Doug's words (p.3) about the early Anabaptists staying out of the arts— 17th century painter Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1607-1669) had connections with the Mennonites:

> Officially Rembrandt was a member of the Re-formed Church, and as yet there has been no evidence that he severed this connection in spite of serious conflicts with the church council, such as the exclusion of Hendrickje Stoffels from communion in 1653, who lived with him after his wife's death. Nevertheless there is some indication that Rembrandt was in close contact with Mennonite circles and from them received essential religious motivations.

- *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/rembrandt_harmensz_van_rijn_1607_1669

Further Reading

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A story of a place

Karlin Love

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I'd been in town for two hours, newly landed from the USA, barely awake, probably cradling a cup of tea. My hosts' nine-year-old came home from school and asked, 'Have you been to the Gorge yet?'

Cataract Gorge, a short walk from the CBD, is Launceston's iconic natural feature, although I didn't know it then. Walking paths from easy to challenging, swimming pool, chairlift, restaurant, kiosk, peacocks, botanic gardens, rock-climbing, tour boats, suspension bridge, scenic lookouts… all based in a stunning natural rock gorge with the South Esk river flowing through – sometimes placid (and tidal at the mouth). When in flood, there's too much water for rafting or kayaking. Foam floats into the estuary. The locals turn out in droves to see their river in its full power and glory, outnumbering by hundreds the bussed-in tourists.

No, I hadn't been to the Gorge. I didn't even know it existed.

A few years later, the city council did up the former

gatekeepers' cottage at the mouth of the Gorge for artist residencies. I was part of a small committee that organised a series of residencies for national and international poets, painters, composers and choreographers who stayed in the spartan cottage overlooking the mouth of the river. I visited them for readings and jam sessions, friendly cups of tea on the veranda.

Moving forward a few more years… I was encouraged to do my own residency. I drew up a plan for three fortnights in different seasons, over the course of a year, when I would try to leave my other work to use the cottage as a studio and immerse myself in this local icon.

The cottage overlooks Kings Bridge and overhangs the northern pathway to the First Basin. It's not a place I had lingered in before, and it proved to be absolutely fascinating. Users and uses are many: adolescent boys jumping off the bridge, rowing crews training, wedding parties being photographed, grandparents with prams, rock climbers, artists sketching from the cliffs opposite, walking commuters, joggers, bike riders and dog walkers. The Gorge is a contemporary sacred site. Rites of passage are performed here.

During my time there, I wrote duets for guitar with other instruments: clarinet, flute and Tibetan singing bowl. I had recently finished several pieces for concert band and a thesis on orchestration. I was hungry for the intimacy of the duet.

Inspired by Desmond Tutu's *No Future Without Forgiveness* and river imagery of washing away pain, sin, hurt, and guilt, I embarked on a study of forgiveness, reading everything I could get my hands on, and discovered depth I'd had no idea of: that forgiveness enables the offended party to go on; that not forgiving traps the victim; that we can have wholeness and reconciliation through genuinely facing the crime, the hurt, the outrage and then intentionally and intelligently choosing ways to live afterwards; that we shouldn't always forget, but live with appropriate caution; that non-forgiveness rules out the possibility of the whole community or nation or world working to its potential.

And it hit home, deep and personal. I had a lot to face.

The music spawned during the residency reflects stages and ways of dealing with offence and forgiveness: avoiding the issue, not worrying about this one, rage and grief, going deep and coming to terms with all the implications. The many moods of the river helped me abstract and find forms for musical reflections on the issues.

It was also very local. My friends came to visit and try drafts of the pieces or eat lunch on the veranda. I recognised people on their walks, at the pool or the kiosk.

Eventually it all came together as a concert held at the Queen Victoria Museum, in the gallery with Graeme Base's *Waterhole* exhibition. The music was interspersed with excerpts from my reading, perspectives on the journey of forgiveness, reflections upon my time at the Gorge, and stories and information on water issues in the developing world. The proceeds went to Oxfam and TEAR for water projects. It was one of the truest things I've done.

Finding a story in a place: residencies

I've had two residencies in Tasmania: one at Cataract Gorge and an earlier one at the Eddystone Point Lightstation in the far northeast. Both facilitated major turning points in my music.

Prior to the Eddystone residency most of my composition was influenced by my teaching: opening windows to new ways of making and organising sounds. Any works that were connected to 'place' were tourist pieces: looking at a new place as an outsider, not expecting to stay.

When I applied for the residency, I was looking to change that, to write music that contained more musical power and emotion – to express, more than educate. I wanted to see if the incessant rhythm of the sea would influence my composition, and once I was there I spent hours recording. The ocean has always been a centring force for me. I grew up on an island on the other side of it. So in that sense Eddystone wasn't new – it was another side to a place that had always been in me.

Even there, on the edge of wilderness, it was obvious that humans were part of the environment, part of the place, and had been for a long time. Aboriginal middens are the oldest signposts to being in the place, followed by European lighthouse builders, fishermen and tourists, activists and volunteers. I was drawn to learning about humans in the place as well as naming the shells and flowers, and watching birds, dolphins and fish. And the exploration and experience took me to issues and other stories that I worked with in the pieces that came out of the residency.

A local place grounding a big story

A sense of place provides a big story to fit into or respond to. Sometimes it is enough to create art in order to better know the place. Often, though, bigger issues arise. They may be issues of the place, the local environment, or local people. Or they may be more general issues that are illuminated by, yet transcend, the place.

I have my personal collection of ongoing big stories I carry with me to all places: faith (and doubt), family, world citizen, place in the natural world. There are many things I care about that don't easily show in counterpoint or instrumentation. There are big issues I can't truly process in music.

Composing, however, is one of the ways I work with them. Writing a substantial piece of music requires a period of obsession. These are issues I've been willing to be obsessed with. On the other hand, within the piece, musical sense must still dominate. The place and the story contribute inspiration for some of the elements but they don't define the piece. I want it to make sense without the story.

William Oates said something to the effect of, 'We can't all be aboriginal but we can all be indigenous'. 'Indigenous' here means to belong to the land and be a caretaker of it.

Residencies make it easier to ground my work in place and nurture my indigenous-ness. Creating works that reflect upon issues of a place sharpen my sensitivity to its issues and make me a better caretaker.

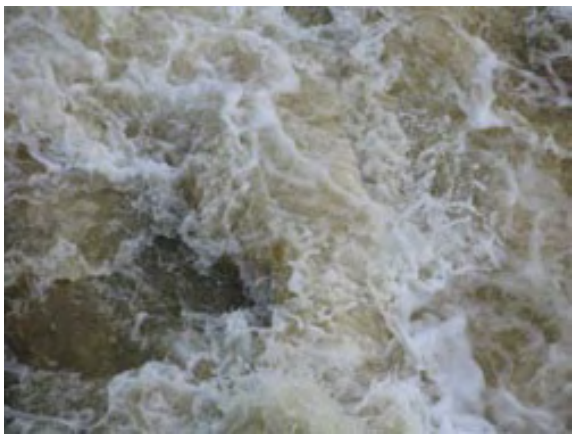
The better future I hope for involves living lighter materially but richer culturally. Somehow that means locally, which may be tricky as one's music gets more specialised and appeals to a specialised audience. I think we can develop those audiences where we are, to some extent, if they are our people, and if we are telling stories of our place.

There are other, non-geographical ways of being community such as the internet, of course. There is much richness there and keeping our eyes and ears open and our work out there is essential.

My current project is a work for the next National Australian Society for Music Education conference to be held in Launceston in July. It is a concert band piece which reflects upon one aspect of life in a regional city: being able to see the stars. I'm watching the sky more, the lights and movement patterns of cars, planes, bikes, birds, and clouds.

I hope my music will encourage people to take time, reflect and notice what is around them: place, social structures, environment. And if it helps them notice the places I was moved by, that's even better.

Works that reflect a place and 'big story'



'Gannets Flight' (*On Power* - solo electric guitar and symphonic wind ensemble, 1999 - 3rd movement) will always be about the power of the ocean and the Creator for me. It is other things too, such as a tribute to my favourite

electric guitarists, particularly Carlos Santana and Al Dimeola. It is influenced by the character and strengths of members of the University of Tasmania Community Wind Orchestra at the time it was written. It is an exploration of the diminished scale as recommended by Ken Benshoof, a former teacher, and an act of gratitude.

Flow (clarinet trio and djembe or bass clarinet case, 1999) and *Ebb* (clarinet trio and 5 Tibetan singing bowls, 1999) contrast surf and tide pools, youth and aging, explicit and hidden energy.
Whitewater (clarinet and guitar, 2002) will always be about the brown, racing, foam-laced river in gentle (raft-able) flood between the high dolerite columns of Cataract Gorge.

Tears (electric guitar and Tibetan singing bowl) begins to explore grief and the watery links between the human and the river – human grief for wrongs received or committed; environmental grief for abuse of the land and its inhabitants.

Torrent (bass clarinet and guitar 2002-06) is about a downpour of rain, but more about the torrent of rage over a deep childhood hurt that had been buried until I was immersed in concurrent reflection on water and forgiveness, thanks to the residency.

Blackwater I (alto flute and guitar, 2002) considers deep pools within the flowing river: the unseen life within, the richness of the darkness below. The journey toward forgiveness is a deep and internal one, often plumbing well below the visible and conscious surface.

Blackwater II (alto flute and guitar, 2002-06) celebrates the energy welling up from the depths, darker and stronger than that of *Whitewater*, but still good. Good, but not necessarily nice. The journey toward forgiveness is good, but painful. It does not come cheaply.

Which place for my story?

I am an immigrant, from another hemisphere, another temperate maritime climate. I embrace all of the places I've lived and worked. They are places that have entered my life and in some way I entered theirs.

I grew up in a town that you left. The people who stayed were of Dutch farmer stock. Navy families moved all the time. Like other school teachers' kids, I also moved on. University in Seattle, summer work in Alaska, first real job in Atlanta, back to Seattle for more university.

When I left Seattle, I felt new music in the US was very urban. Australian music seemed so different, influenced by different rhythms, more open, less competitive, less urgent. I liked that for a while, then I missed the energy of the US, the self-assurance (a.k.a. arrogance). I ignored 'art music' and immersed myself in jazz and then various world musics. My musical influences come from many places, places I have and haven't been myself.

I didn't come to Australia to start a new life. I came to try out a job I couldn't have gotten in the U.S. for two years, maybe three.

But we stayed. And became citizens. I left the job, and we still stayed. We stayed in Launceston, Tasmania, in particular. Why? Community: friends, family, a little bit of land that feeds us, proximity to great walking and beaches.

In Launceston, place is a significant issue. I believe all artists have had to think about why they are here. Did they choose to stay? Or choose to come here instead of somewhere else? Did they choose to accept what circumstances gave them? There are some who assume that if you are here you aren't good enough to work somewhere else. That is unfortunate if it stifles ambition and experimentation.

I like the multifaceted role of a musician in this community. I perform on several instruments, teach, write, organise, program adventurous works. Yet I often hate it because it's so hard to preserve the time required to go deep and write big pieces. Sometimes I wish there were more expert performers available or concert organisers looking for innovative content!

But I love the good people I've been privileged to work with who have supported directions I might not have been able to pursue in a big city: the University and Community Music Program, Garry Greenwood & The Chordwainers leather ensemble. Working with Garry while he was with us, and the Chordwainers, has been the richest experience, and will no doubt hold me here for a good while. As a distinctive Tasmanian ensemble we wrestle with issues of inspiration, location and improvisation… but that's another article.

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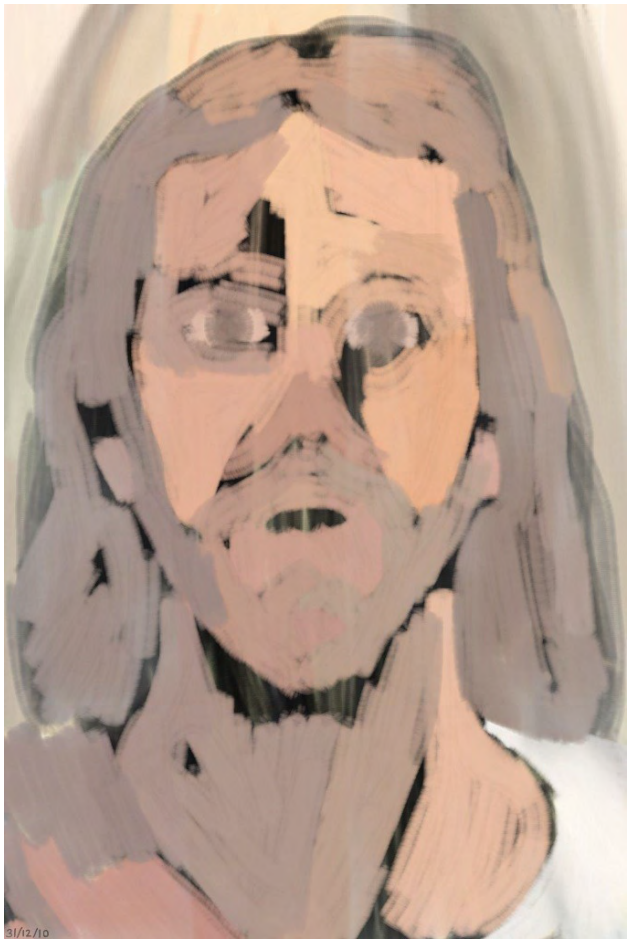
Corey Biscoe-Marwick

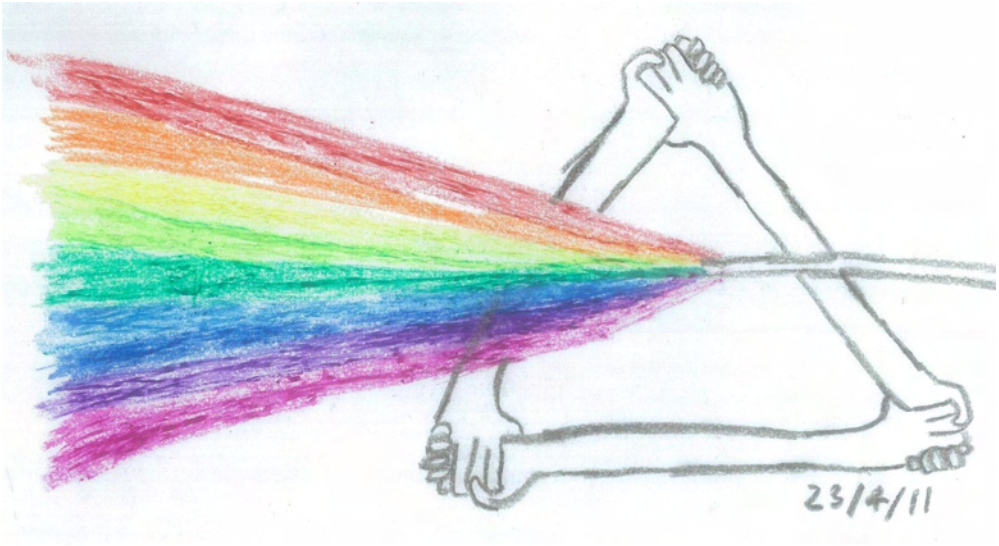


Doug Sewell— Invasion; Framed; Low Tide; Abandoned Swamp

In defence of the divine image

A response to "God, Gays and Mennos"

By Caleb Morgan Anderson



I'm writing in response to our brother Philip's article in the last issue of *On the Road* where he challenges recent Christian support for gay marriage, gay ordination, etc. I commend his bravery in speaking out for what he sees as an unfashionable, yet Christlike, position. I acknowledge that the people I know who come closest to deserving the title 'radical Christian' don't tend to see homosexuality as a problem. But I'm not sure how much comfort this fringe popularity is to LGBT people in the face of the continuing restrictions, rejection and guilt placed upon them by those sections of society and church that remain unaffected by 'radical Christian fashion'.

I have a different view to Philip on homosexuality, but I'm not the right person to provide a systematic apology for what Ted Grimsrud calls an 'inclusivist' position. I would, however, like to comment on a couple of things in Philip's article that particularly bothered me.

Philip describes some of the alarming changes that have taken place in his country over the last few decades. He makes the outrageous claim that "the root of this violence and distrust germinated in the bedrooms of the nation", specifically the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Philip does not refer to any research illustrating such a relationship, nor offer much of an explanation of how exactly it might work. I've dipped my toe just deep enough into social theory to know that there are many highly sophisticated (and conflicting) ideas about what drives social change, and just as many different ideas about what exactly has happened to Western societies since WWII. I'd be interested to hear Philip unpack his 'sexually deterministic' alternative explanation, and how exactly he sees homosexuality fitting into the picture. Aside from some rather politically-incorrect thoughts about crowded prisons and army barracks, I really can't see any connection whatsoever between homosexual love and our nations' heartbreaking prison populations and military budgets.

I would, however, recommend a recent popular book called *The Spirit Level* which makes a very well-researched case for attributing the distrust and violence Philip mentions (along with many other social and health problems) to economic inequality, rather than personal ethics.

There is a more serious side to the way Philip refers to Romans 1 and casually blames sexual deviance for all the problems of the West. To me it sounds dangerously close to Christian fundamentalists' explaining everything from US soldier deaths to the

Christchurch earthquake as God's wrath on societies for tolerating homosexuals.

The other main thing that got me thinking in Philip's article was his suggestion that a heterosexual marriage is the sole projection of the image of the Trinity in humanity. Our unofficial community of Catholic-ish misfits here in Otaki, NZ has a wide range of people; young, old, Irish, Maori, Pakeha, etc. In the matter of 'family status', we have singles with and without children, and couples with and without children. We wouldn't necessarily do too well from the social-Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' perspective Philip mentions, but I think we're doing pretty well in terms of Peter Kropotkin's alternative evolutionary perspective, whereby the species and communities that thrive are the ones that co-operate best.

I sincerely believe that we see the image of the trinitarian God of Love in this ragtag community. Making us in her image, God's made us male and female (though some of us would contest the meanings of those constructs!), and he's made us diverse in a whole lot of other ways too. Philip's suggestion that it's only in a heterosexual marriage that God's plural image is displayed doesn't stack up to our experience. It's an insult to the children, the singles, the separated and the celibates as well as the homosexuals amongst us.

I agree with Nathan that it would be nice to hear some other perspectives on this issue. Perhaps Philip's article will be a catalyst for some good thinking, reading and discussion amongst *On the Road* readers. My experience is that Christians of a relatively progressive bent have a range of opinions on homosexuality, but all agree that it's easier not to talk about this awkward matter (I've certainly been guilty of this). But the continuing marginalisation faced by homosexual people, especially in the church, does not go away if we ignore it. We may not be able to agree about the theology and ethics surrounding the matter, but surely it is better that we form our consensus not around silence, but around compassion for all people facing any kind of exclusion or oppression.

Seeing as this is the Art issue, I've decided to draw a picture to accompany this piece, as seen on the first page... Enjoy.

Response from Philip Friesen

Thanks to Caleb for responding to my article. In this kind of discussion it is easy to talk past each other. Evidence that convinces me to change my views would be like this: (1) Show what hermeneutical principles led to each conclusion, (2) reveal awareness of cultural values that might influence the hermeneutics, and (3) show evidence of real, personal wrestling with God.

I was brought up a Mennonite and refused to go to war, but I had many friends who did go to war and clearly loved Jesus as much as I did. My BIG question was how the same Holy Spirit could lead God's people in such diametrically opposite directions. After decades of ministry, travel, and learning human culture I began to see how God works differently in different cultures, and yet calls all to account in the same Spirit. My book, *The Old Testament Roots of Nonviolence,* deals with this issue.

One difficult thing about this issue is how multiple issues get bundled together as I see it. The three issues are, (1) the abuse and ridicule endured by homosexuals, (2) the nature and purpose of marriage, and (3) the uniting of all who love God, including homosexuals, into one body. Each of these three has relevance for the others, but bundling often blurs the multiple realities involved.

I'd like to clarify a couple of points in your article, Caleb.

1. You mention *The Spirit Level* as a source demonstrating the real reasons for distrust and violence in society to flow from economic inequality. Yes, this is the popular theory, but it is generally assumed from the beginning and never actually proved. The current economic downturn in the United States has seen a corresponding drop in violent crime that has the social science people baffled. A friend of mine also recently drew my attention to the fact that the higher crime rates during the prosperous roaring 1920's fell significantly as soon as the Great Depression hit. The Bible speaks volumes about economic injustice, but it points elsewhere as to the root causes of distrust and violence. The very fact that, as Caleb mentions, there are so many social theories of cause and effect simply demonstrates that the experts don't know.

2. You write , "I'd disagree with Philip that distrust of

government, church and business is necessarily a bad thing..." I didn't say distrust of government, etc. was a bad thing. It's the lack of trustworthiness generally at all levels I lament. If Genesis makes marriage and family the foundation of society, which I believe it to be, then when couples are not trustworthy to each other, all of society will imbibe anxiety and learn suspicion from childhood up. Whatever other sociological causes can be identified for divorce, social disintegration, etc, they are still nonetheless secondary.

3. You quote me as suggesting, "a heterosexual marriage is the sole projection of the image of the Trinity in humanity." No, I didn't say that!! I think you bundle marriage and inclusion into one issue here. I tried to say that heterosexual marriage is the primary foundation upon which all human life, identity, and relationship emerges, and Genesis makes a big deal out of this, while the New Testament picks this up, revealing its importance to the plot of the Biblical story, both in its high view of marriage, and the metaphorical application to the relationship of Christ with his church.

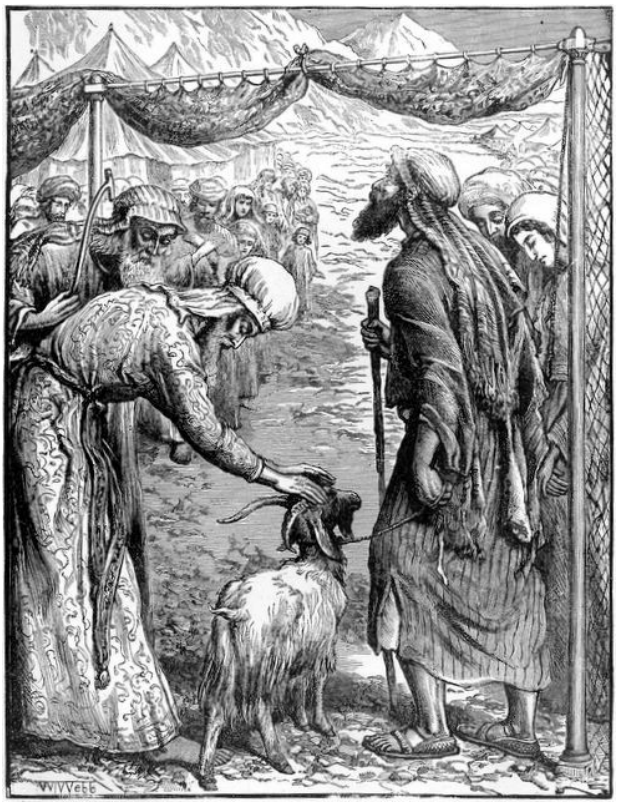
There seems to be an assumption by those who bundle the issue of marriage with the issue of inclusion that there is some kind of universal human right for every individual to be sexually active. This is not true, but not all can accept this teaching.

In my book *The Old Testament Roots of Nonviolence,* I describe accommodating social structures, which are social arrangements God permits but did not intend, and which come at a high price in the long term. Israel's monarchy was such an arrangement. I can see same sex marriage as an accommodating social structure. It is not what God intended, but God will use it until it proves its inadequacy. This does not mean the church should endorse it, but the church will have to deal with it, just as the Hebrews had to live with their kings.

I feel badly not having talked about the inexcusable disdain and abuse heaped on homosexuals in society. When the marriage issue is bundled with the issue of emotional, verbal, and physical abuse, passions from one issue become transferred to the other on both sides, and communication stops. I realize that my conclusions about marriage will eliminate some options for dealing with the other, but I hope that my conclusions about one issue do not close the door to communication on the other. Both are important.

Australian scapegoats – what is a Christian response?

By Paul Tyson



Leviticus 16 is all about Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Two goats have a significant role to play in this day of central significance to the covenant between God and His people. One goat is sacrificed as a sin offering, the other goat has all the iniquities of the people laid on its head and is driven out from the people and into the wilderness. This second goat is the scapegoat.

In Leviticus the scapegoat is a means of objectifying the sins of the people and of symbolically driving the evil within the community out of the people. In this manner, the sins of the people may be ritually 'dealt with' and the right relationship between the holy God and His people is achieved.

The scapegoat is not a notion unique to the Hebrews. Jesus Christ performs a scapegoat function as well. The sins of the world are laid on the head of the Son of Man, and he is 'driven out' most finally from his community, and all human community, by being executed outside the city walls. Indeed, broadly speaking, this phenomenon of finding individual representatives of collective guilt and totally repudiating them by driving them out of the community is a widely observable feature of human society. Durkheim and Freud find 'sacred' moral conformity and the indelible guilt associated with the unavoidable clash between collective control (the moral ought) and the dark powers of individual instinctual desire, a basic component of all human societies. Thus, the collective moral and religious need for scapegoats is a very deep part of human society itself. We in modern Australia are no different to all other societies in this regard.

Who are the individual representatives of our collective sins, who are those so unutterably unpardonable that we will consider no path of inclusion within our midst as even possible? Perhaps there are three types of individuals who play this role in our society, and perhaps the offenses that cause them to be utterly rejected have a deep connectivity with the collective guilt, the corporate sin, of modern Australia. I am thinking of people smugglers, terrorists and paedophiles.

The people smuggler

People smugglers (and the "illegal immigrants" who pay them) subvert the sovereign rights of our state to determine who will come into Australia and who will not, and people smugglers are despicable because they traffic in human life. No punishment can be too severe for them. Those complicit in their filthy trade - John Howard's "Illegals" - equally deserve to be locked up in detention centres out in the wilderness, detained there indefinitely, and then excluded from the community and driven back out of our people if we reject their attempt to "jump the queue" of legitimate entry into Australia.

What collective guilt do they manifest? Possibly more than one guilt. Firstly, Australian Crown Land, and all subsequent private property, is a territory simply taken from the many primordial Aboriginal nations of this land, either by force or by obscene "trade" (such as the "sale" of what is now greater Melbourne for a one off sum paid in blankets, flour and cheap trinkets). And that is not all. Mother England set up its penal colony on this land's shores as a solution to the fact that the heavy handed Law And Order enthusiasm of the Establishment greatly over-reached the capacity of England to house and feed the vast numbers of its displaced and desperately poor petty criminals. This double injustice – to the original nations of the southern continent and to the displaced poor of the British Isles – is the womb of Australia, and it is a place of deep and dark blood guilt. And this original power of violent land appropriation and this original vesting of the state with violent authority over the most vulnerable of its own subjects is both the cause of all our landed wealth and the underlying reality of legal power in Australia, to this day.

In what way, then, do people smugglers bear our collective guilt? In this way. Our nation's sovereignty does not rests on any high and noble moral legitimacy. Rather, our sovereignty is grounded in murderous racial violence, staggering illegal opportunism, and the exploitation of the vulnerable in order to further the interests of the powerful. But we do not want to think of our Australian nation in these terrible – but true – terms. So the people smuggler is the one on whose head the sin of manipulative illegal opportunism and the callous exploitation of the vulnerable is heaped. Equally "Illegal Immigrants" become an objectification of the invading hoards who would wrench our just and beautiful paradise from us by stealth. Both people smugglers and "Illegal Immigrants" are made scapegoats to salve our collective guilt.

And another thing. The purely instrumental and opportunistic trade in human life has a further deep parallel in our contemporary psyche – the notion of the 'human resource'. The institutional reduction of the worth of ordinary working men and women to the purely instrumental calculations of large corporations is rampant in our society. Systemic indignities and exploitations are simply the norm which our HR 'rational administrations' impose on the Australian labour force. How do our exorbitantly paid and perked CEOs sleep at night after they implement savage budget cuts and waves of redundancies on people actually doing the work of the organizations they run, or after they secure a new wave of short term, insecure, low paid (or better still, offshore) contractual labour? Yes, we have a deep collective guilt here. We need scapegoats that symbolize the instrumental use of human resources for opportunistic ends so that we do not need to look at our own guilt in this area.

Finally, on the people smuggler front, there is our relationship with the USA. People smuggling is, for some completely undemonstrated 'reason', associated with terrorist infiltration and hence is not only a heinous crime in its own right, but is a threat to the "free world". To show how committed we are to the moral legitimacy and strong activism of "the free world" it sends a good political message to our powerful ally, and to our domestic audience, to be uncompromisingly vigilant against people smugglers. So the people smuggler is also a necessary sacrifice to our involvement in the War On Terror. And so 'the people smuggler' scapegoat morphs seamlessly into 'the terrorist' scapegoat, though the collective guilt categories here are quite distinct from those outlined above for the people smuggler.

(Note: nowhere have I said or implied that people smuggling is in any way a good or justifiable activity.)

The terrorist

Terrorists are fanatical religious extremists who murder innocent people because they hate "the free world". They are evil, completely intolerant, with no respect for human life, totally unlike us. How could they be bearers of our collective guilt?

The global world order – over which the Western "free world" has hegemony – is a very violent place, full of systemic exploitation and meaningless death and suffering, and our role as hegemons in this world order carries with it profound collective guilt.

Joseph Stiglitz – former Chief Economist of the World Bank, and a Noble Prize winner in Economics – wrote a devastating critique of the human misery

imposed on the world's poorest peoples by the IMF in his book "Globalization and Its Discontents". His critique is one-sided, overlooking the role of the World Bank, but this oversight is corrected by George Monbiot's "Age of Consent". The picture that emerges is this. After World War Two the USA set up the global financial system as we now know it, and set in place institutions to regulate this system, namely the two Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (and later the World Trade Organization). US treasury has controlling power over the Bretton Woods institutions, and they are overt tools of US global trade interests and the global financial system over which the US presides as the dominant military and economic global superpower. But this system does not benefit ordinary American tax payers. Indeed, it seems American tax payers simply 'insure' the risks of the high flying financial speculation which is integral to this system. According to Congressman Alan Grayson, in the aftermath of the GFC of 2008 the Federal Reserve Bank of the USA gave US $9 trillion of credit (that is, gave taxpayers this amount of debt) to undisclosed multinational private financial institutions in order to simply absorb these reckless speculator's bad debts. This act, and the unavoidable presence of high level lobbyists from the globe's major multinational corporations in Washington, gives considerable credence to theologian William Cavanaugh's observation that the priorities of the modern Western state and the economic interests of powerful multi-national corporations can no longer be distinguished.

So, our global financial system is regulated by the Bretton Woods institutions who are controlled by the Federal Reserve Bank of the USA and whose directives are guided by the demands of the dominant global corporations who stride the narrow world like giants. And this global financial system – as Susan George recounts in "A Fate Worde than Debt" – undergirds the third world debt crisis and brazenly promotes the interests of powerful multi-national companies over the interests of poor governments for the most basic welfare of their people. Today, at least 20,000 children will die in Africa from poor water, malnutrition and diseases easily cured by basic medical interventions. And this happens every day. And the power and wealth of the first world rests on such politically, economically and militarily sustained entrenched abrogations of the basic human needs of innocent people in the global South.

So the terrorist represents our collective guilt in global violence, exploitation and complete disregard for the value of innocent human life. They are the evil Other who is in fact ourselves.

They also stand as scapegoats for the threat to the global environment. After 9/11, George Bush urged Americans to go shopping and show the world that no-one is going to force a change of the American lifestyle expressed in the most basic symbol of American liberty – the freedom to shop. If America wants big fuel guzzling cars, cheap high quality consumer goods manufactured in the sweat shops of the third world and more and more growth and wealth and power – without apparent limit – then no number of crazy and evil religious fanatic are going to stop them exercise their God given freedom. High level money and power will not curb their appetite for growth and exploitation. This is clearly demonstrated by the simple fact that nothing has changed in relation to speculation and exorbitant remuneration 'rewards' in our financial sector after the GFC. But at 'low culture' too, the "American Way" (and certainly the "Australian Way") is consumerism, and here our right to purchase what we want and to have the 'standard of living' that we desire – no matter what the cost in natural exploitation and off shore labour – is considered as our basic right and freedom. But, our 'freedom' is killing the earth. So the terrorist scapegoats all our guilt ridden fears about the future of the planet too.

(Note: nowhere have I said or implied that terrorism is in any way a good or justifiable activity. In no sense do I deny the terrible loss and pain caused to people who have family members who are victims of terrorism.)

The paedophile

Here, surely, is someone totally unlike us, someone simply too horrendously evil to tolerate in our society, someone we exclude not as a scapegoat carrying our own guilt, but simply as an evil other that must be expelled? To the contrary – the stronger the sense of objectified otherness in the scapegoat the deeper the connection such a figure is likely to have with collective guilt.

Since the 1960s, the 'sexual revolution' has effected a profound change in our cultural landscape, and the stability of marriage and sexual relations has been radically eroded. Further, marketeers now relentlessly prime us with images of desire, images of sexual attraction, images of lust and the generation and consumption of new and exciting sexual identities. And the internet, print and visual media are simply swimming with pornography – the human (typically female) body as a de-personalized sexual object of consumption, of violent power, and even of destruction.

The general cultural effect of our highly sexualized visual culture is that at a low, yet pervasive level, we easily objectify and project our own sexuality as an object of manipulation and consumption in the social landscape, and – in fantasy or actuality – we objectify, manipulate and consume the sexuality of others as a matter of course. And in this cultural context our children grow up. They grow up with far less familial stability than the pre-1960s generation, and increasingly advertising sexualizes children and their playthings. And we think looking sexy is fun and good, and we respect anyone's sexual preferences and behaviours as entirely their own private and free business. Only one aspect of Victorian morality in relation to sexuality is still held onto as a taboo – the sexual innocence of children. But in an environment of sexual liberalism characterized by the casting off of culturally Christian taboos against fornication, adultery and homosexuality, that this one taboo (which includes incest) survives seems more of an anomaly to the norm of sexual liberty than anything else. In fact, this one taboo must stand in for all sexual taboos, for it is the only taboo we now firmly accept as a culture. So when someone breaks that taboo, all the moral doubts and latent guilt that linger in the uncertainties, the relational damage, the personal confusion and the de-personalizing objectifications of our sexual "liberty" surface with the force of profound repression. Thus, culturally, we can understand the collective 'logic' of the extraordinarily powerful objectification and denunciation of the sexual monster as The Other in the paedophile.

I do not intend this observation to be read moralistically. Rather, it is tragic. Romantic love plays a vital role in our culture's conception of meaning and fulfilment, so when sexual relationships fail the personal damage people receive is a most painful inner wound that many never find healing from. Here the norms of our culture set us up to fail. For on the one hand, romantic love, integral with sexual love, is the highest social ideal of our culture and the experience of family life is the prime source of relational meaning in people's lives. On the other hand our post-1960s sexual liberalism is harnessed by the relentless self gratifying atomism of our consumer culture. What Theodor Adorno calls 'the culture industry' (the reciprocating nexus between the popular media, money and markets) makes brazen use of sexual desire in marketing and entertainment, works against loyal relational interdependence, works against the sacrificial demands of love, generates erotic dissatisfaction within marriage, and cheapens sexual love to the point of comodification. Equally the self actualizing norms and the amazing time and energy sinks of our careers undermines family and romantic love both at the level of high satisfaction and at the bread and butter level of sheer time and presence. In this cultural context, that any sexual fidelity is achieved, that any marriage survives, that any family experiences the warmth of unconditional acceptance and home and belonging togetherness is miraculous.

Yet… it must be said that those who suffer most directly from our world of sexual freedom are children. Marital unfaithfulness destroys marriages and causes irretrievable security and identity damage to many a child of a broken family. And the child does *not* choose – but simply suffers – the familial disintegration that results from the pervasive cultural fragility of bonded adult sexual relationships. Perhaps it is simply an uncomfortable truth that an exclusive and life long sexual bond between one woman and one man is integral to the stability of the family. Even so, there are undoubtedly far too many cases where the marital bond is the site of terrible interpersonal destruction to one or both of the adults in a marriage, and hence a cause of terrible familial dysfunction, and a blight on the life of the children of that marriage. Still, such a tragedy is a failure of the familial environment best suited to the needs of children; this failure is no argument against lifelong marital faithfulness in relation to the needs of relational continuity and identity stability for children.

Because we can now conveniently separate 'recreational sex' from the pro-creational 'function' of sexual union, we falsely conclude that sex has got nothing to do with children unless we choose to get pregnant. But then, once the choice for a child has happened (and it still happens accidentally), you have people whose identity is irrevocably tied to one man and one woman – their mother and father – for their entire lives, whether they like it or not. Today sexual liberty is a means of serious disregard for the interest and needs of children, and this disregard is a widespread feature of our approach to sexual norms. The negative abuse of children—not caring, not being there, disowning, using them in the adult politics of revenge and resentment— has many terrible ongoing effects, and in many cases the start of such abuse is linked to liberal adult sexuality. And even when a marriage breaks up "amicably", the disintegration, dislocation and complex re-configurations of the familial environment such scenario entails cannot fail to produce confusion, instability and a simple irrevocable loss that cannot be recovered and that must scare. And it goes further than that. My parents divorced when I was a married adult, but their divorce has intergenerational implications for their grandchildren. No man, no woman, and no sexually

bonded man and woman, is an island. Within our cultural norms today adult sexual 'freedom' does terribly damage children, so it is not surprising that the worst expression of the abuse of familial trust – the paedophile – is a person whose sinful sexual Otherness must be totally driven from our midst. They are objectifications and bearers of the collective guilt of our sexual norms.

(Note: nowhere have I said or implied that paedophilia is in anything other than the most terrible crime against a child that one could commit. In no sense do I deny the terrible damage and pain caused to people who are victims of paedophilia.)

A suggestion

So we have then three scapegoats, three bearers of collective guilt whom we – as Australians – cast into the wilderness and expel from our society: the people smuggler, the terrorist, the paedophile. What do we as Christians make of this situation?

Here is a suggestion.

As Australians we share our nation's collective guilt. Whilst sociologically scapegoats are a natural mechanism in all societies, as Christians we must look for a more radical solution to our collective guilt than the objectification of our guilt onto the Unforgivable Other whom we ritually expel from our midst. For if we have received grace, and if Christ was the scapegoat whom we killed, and yet Christ in His death removed the collective guilt of Adam once and for all, then we are no longer under the natural law of societies.

The evils that these three scapegoats personify – both in their personal behaviours and as symbolic objectifications of our collective guilt – are indeed profound, destructive and defiling evils, and are all entirely incompatible with the Kingdom of Heaven. But if our scapegoats are seen firstly as embodiments of collective guilt, then our response to their presence in our midst should not be one of self righteous judgement of the other but of mourning and repentance on behalf of the collective guilt they represent, and in which we partake. We must pray for our nation and seek to embody life that is penitent towards our collective guilts and that seeks the power of the Holy Spirit to walk contrary to the way of our culture. We must stand prophetically against our culture in these areas. Thanks to our scapegoats, things can carry on as they are without any collective repentance and without any over-throw of the authorities who uphold our collective norms and who have vested wealth and power interests in the preservation of the prevailing status quo. This, in fact, is the central sociological point of this paper.

We must beware of moral hysteria. Moral hysteria always signals profound danger within the collective subconscious for two reasons. Firstly, this dynamic easily unleashes the lynching tendencies of human society. And good respectable Christian churchmen have often been at the forefront of harsh justice and mob lynchings in Western cultural history. For the church, as an upholder of moral respectability within society, is particularly prone to being used as a conservative tool of the prevailing status quo. Secondly, moral hysteria is a warning sign that the morality of the status quo is collapsing. On this later point, if we fail to heed what our moral hysteria says about the *norms* of our collective way of life, we will plunge like lemmings over the cliff in our righteous support of the prevailing norms, and we will be dashed on the rocks of moral catastrophe below. Nazi Germany and McCarthyism were driven by *moral* consciousness, and they are not ancient history. The Germans and the Americans are not people unlike us. With just a few changes in historical conditions witch hunts and concentration camps could flare up into an orgy of violence and inhumanity, here and now, very easily.

But let us swing from a sociological perspective to a theological perspective. Christ indeed was a true Other – a man without sin. As such, as a man who lived, spoke and acted without sin, he presented a complete challenge to the authorities and vested powers that upheld the collective righteousness of his day. This is what made it necessary for him to be made a scapegoat. For the natural collective consciousness of any community (and our churches are no exception) does not want to confess its guilt truly or repent from the sins which are at the base of its power structures and collective norms.

So there are two types of scapegoat – those whose sins objectify collective guilt, and those whose love and holiness redemptively takes in collective guilt out of a genuine freedom from those sins. As we saw with Barabbas, the collective consciousness would rather forgive a murderous criminal whose sins leave the status quo of sin itself in place than have the whole kit and caboodle of power and sin that undergirds any human society radically challenged by a genuine Other who is Good. But if this is true, and if we are called to walk in the Way of Christ, then if we are not radically and lovingly against the sins of our community then we are at no risk of ever becoming a scapegoat for our community. We are at no risk of being a witness to the Way of Christ.

So… are we, or could we ever become, such a risk? Or would we rather just not think about such things and live quiet and respectable lives that ruffle no feathers and that conform, largely, to the morals and spirit of our times?

Contributor Profiles

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Nathan Hobby will be self-publishing his second novel, *The House of Zealots*, later this year.

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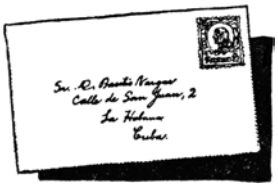

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