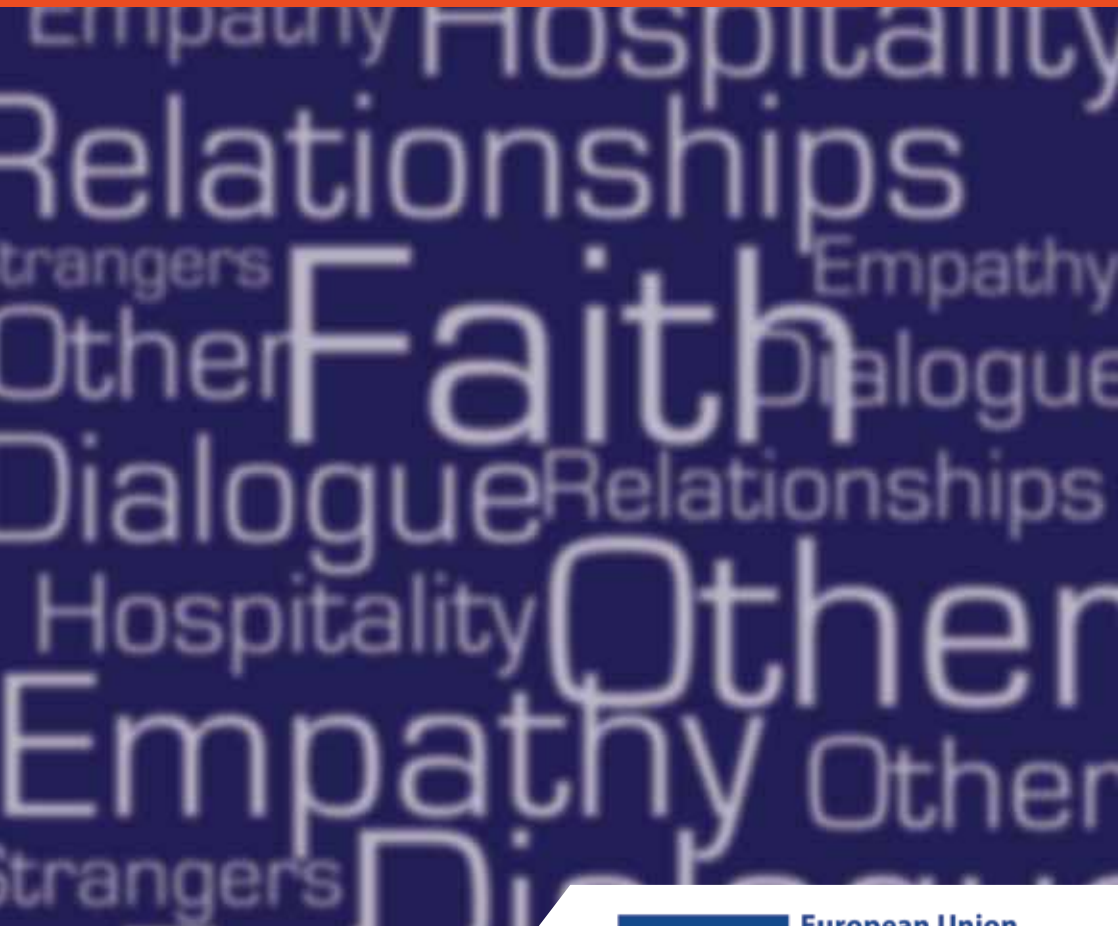


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An Integrated Approach to Peace-Building

Being the Other  
Theological Students' Conference 2011



Experiential Learning Paper No. 6  
September 2011

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# Foreword

## Introduction

I am pleased to commend the sixth paper in the Irish Peace Centres' Experiential Learning series which returns to the issues of faith and conflict. The paper contains the transaction of an IPC theological students conference held earlier this year under the title of "Being the Other" and seeks to capture and share the learning.

The conference recognised that many faith groups, and other community interest groups, speak of "welcoming the other". While this is a good starting point the conference acknowledged that in order to move forward groups must make the journey from a sense of being the host, which carries connotations of power, to a discussion on how they would act when they are in the minority. The contributions in the paper explore aspects of what it means to be "other" and how religious texts speak to this experience, from a variety of disciplines e.g. biblical exegesis, philosophical speculation, linguistic analysis and personal story.

One of the aims of Irish Peace Centres is to help build relationships where there are none, and to help embed peace within traditions. This paper looks at the core of resources within religious texts, and examines how they can be used to promote relationships across diverse lines, and sometimes barriers, today.

I thank all the contributors to this paper for their honesty and serious mindedness in grappling with these issues. I pay particular thanks to David McMillan and Patrick Kane who did all the groundwork and delivery of the project. Thanks also to the Irish Peace Centres' Pádraig Ó Tuama whose initiative the Theological Students project is, and who gave oversight to the conference and the preparation of the text for publication.



**Peter Sheridan OBE**  
**Chairperson**  
**Irish Peace Centres**

# Introduction

## Holding the Crystal

Many years ago I was taken on a tour of the Waterford Crystal factory. At one stage in the tour we were taken to a section where master craftsmen (they were all men) were cutting one-off items of crystal, golf trophies, special presentations and that kind of thing. As we stood mesmerised, watching the speed and accuracy of their craft, the tour guide took a huge vase from one of the craftsmen and explained more of the detail of the nature of the work and the skill involved. She then proceeded to set the piece in my hands. I froze. This was the only one of its kind. It had been specially blown, cut and polished for a specific order and it was now in my hands. The sense of privilege and responsibility was overwhelming.

I've often reflected on that experience when I have felt privileged to be in a particular and unique situation, usually to do with the sharing of other people's lives. Being involved in the Irish Peace Centre's Theological Student Conference turned out to be one of those 'holding the crystal' experiences. It has been a real privilege to work with Pádraig Ó Tuama and Patrick Kane to see this project through from conception to completion and in particular to have spent time with the authors of the essays contained in this book. However, there are a number of issues that require explanation to set the book in context, to communicate the sense of privilege of being involved in its production and to indicate why I consider it to be of considerable value.

## Context

First, the theme for the conference was given to and not chosen by the participants. The essays, therefore, represent a response to the challenge to articulate something of the resources available within the various religious traditions represented to sustain life and faith when one finds oneself in the position of 'Being the Other'. Some of the participants come from lived experience of being the 'Other', as will become clear as you read the essays. Other participants have had to face the challenge of thinking their way into the experience of being the 'Other' and then explore how they might draw from the resources within their faith tradition to cope in such a situation. The variety of life experience has enriched the contributions and guarantees that as you read these essays you will not only find much to consider but have the opportunity of listening in on some very moving and powerful life stories.

The second element of this work that needs to be understood is that the essays are the product of the shared experience of a residential conference. Each essay was, in its initial form, presented as a paper to all the other participants and then opened for discussion and question. The discussions that followed the presentations as well as being affirmative were frank, challenging and productive. Consequently, the work that appears in this publication has been refined through this process of engagement.

The third aspect of the work that is worthy of mention is that each of the participants has stepped outside of their particular theological discipline to stand in the shared space of addressing this imaginative and challenging theme of 'Being the Other'. Theological conferences or symposiums tend to be structured around particular theological disciplines – church history, practical theology, biblical studies or whatever. On this occasion, whatever their interest as an undergraduate or speciality as a postgraduate, each participant has been willing to stand in this vulnerable space offering up their reflections and thoughts to others who listen with different emphases, skills and perspectives.

This brings me to the final element of the process that has made this such a valuable project. Coming from different seminaries, colleges and universities this group of people had never before met, yet over the period of the conference a remarkable sense of community developed in which difference and diversity were expressed, acknowledged and affirmed. Interesting things happened. There were times when participants felt that they were being 'othered' because of opinions held or convictions expressed. At the same time some who have had extensive experience of being 'othered' got to share the pain experienced and found affirmation in the context of the conference. The significance and capacity of taken-for-granted expressions and language as tools and weapons of 'othering' became apparent in the discussions.

### **Content**

The whole project has been greatly enhanced by having the listening ear and input of Fran Porter who not only prepared and delivered the keynote paper for the conference which is reprinted in full, but shared in the conference discussions and subsequently reviewed each of the essays following the conference proceedings. Fran's input has been invaluable and her willingness to be available for the conference has resulted in the finished work being the fruit of a truly organic process.

The essays are printed in the order in which they were presented at the conference. Editing has been kept to a minimum, allowing each participant to work within the referencing framework with which they are most familiar. Where references have been fully annotated in footnotes they have not been reproduced in a bibliography or reference section. When references have been included in the body of the text the full necessary bibliographic information is to be found at the end of the paper. Where a contributor has wished to retain the sense of 'delivering a presentation' rather than presenting an academic paper references have been dispensed with – unless absolutely necessary. Copyright on the material is held by each of the writers as indicated at the end of each essay.

Throughout the book you will encounter a number of short poems - haikus. As part of the ongoing reflection during the conference we encouraged participants to experiment using a form of the haiku form of Japanese poetry as a means of capturing their thoughts and experience. Charles Beattie provided us with an introduction to haiku – something he uses with his students in Nigeria as a means of bridging a way into thinking about poetry in the Hebrew Scriptures. The results are here for you to savour and enjoy.

Poetry played a significant part of more than the reflective process. With Pádraig on board as our poet in residence (as well as our IPC co-ordinator) one of the evenings was given over to poetry readings at which other members of the conference also read some of their own work. Good poetry can have tremendous power, the power to uncover and to lay bare complex emotions and experiences. Hearing poets read their own poetry can be another of those 'holding the crystal' experiences as private thought and personal experience expressed through thoughtfully honed phrase and cadence are given as a gift to the hearer. As you encounter the haiku read them out loud – even if you are sitting in a coffee shop. It makes a difference.

I am sure that as you read these essays, haiku and poems you will be challenged and encouraged to reflect on your own experience and that of others as you listen in to reflections originating in places as far apart as East Belfast to Ethiopia and traditions as disparate as New Monasticism and Judaism.

David McMillan

**Jayme Reaves**

God welcomes us to  
the table, laden and full  
Her apron dirty

**Glenn Jordan**

the aircon blows hard  
filling the room with hot air  
much like the speaker

# Presbyterian as Other: Standing to the defence of the King in defence of the true religion, liberties and laws of the kingdom.

A Presbyterian response to being 'the Other'

Chris Morris

## Presbyterian Outsiders

Historically, Presbyterians for many years found themselves to be 'The Other' in Ireland, and the same was true in some extent in England and even Scotland. In Ireland, the Presbyterian Ulster Scots were regarded with intense suspicion by the authorities, who sought to impose religious conformity and excluded the Presbyterians, like Catholics, from civil office, to such effect that Belfast, a Presbyterian town, was governed by a corporation of Anglicans. The Presbyterian church, which could not quite be ignored, was marginalised. Its marriages had no legal standing, and it was not until well into the nineteenth century that a Presbyterian minister could conduct a marriage that involved a non-Presbyterian. This approach was, predictably, less than successful in instilling a sense of loyalty in people who belonged to a tradition with its own approach to oppressive authority.

The Scottish reformation had taken place, not under the direction of traditional authority, but largely in spite of it. The reformers achieved a measure of authority themselves and were not minded to accord much respect to theories concerning the divine right of kings. In 1638, in face of attempts by Charles I to change their church according to his lights, Scottish Presbyterians signed a national covenant. This spelt out their views on religious matters, and committed them to 'stand to the defence of our dread Sovereign the King's Majesty, his person and authority, in the defence and preservation of the aforesaid true religion, liberties and laws of the kingdom'. In practice, the preservation of true religion, liberties and law took priority and the Scots raised an army to help the King's Majesty to understand this. Five years later, there was a Solemn League and Covenant with the English, who were engaged in their own war to help the King's Majesty to understand. In the next generation, there were still those who resisted the King's Majesty, some enduring persecution and death, and others waging a guerrilla war against his soldiers, in the name of the Covenant. The matter was not resolved in Scotland until the Glorious Revolution in 1688 brought to power William III, a name also not without significance in Ireland.

William III's preferred Irish settlement was quite tolerant, but the subsequent government of the English and Anglican Ascendancy pursued policies that were not. One response of Presbyterians in Ireland was to resist their disadvantage, by seeking change. They played a leading part during the 1780s in the work of the Volunteers who sought to promote constitutional change, and during the 1790s they were prominent among



the revolutionary United Irishmen. During the nineteenth century, the nature of the perceived disadvantage changed. Authority was no longer persecuting Presbyterians, but the Home Rule proposals of Gladstone and his successors seemed set to hand them over to a state that would take on the task. It was not accidental that resistance to attempts to impose Home Rule was summarized in the Solemn League & Covenant of 1912, and the threatened use of armed force in resistance came very close to being a reality. In the event, Northern Ireland was given its own, rather unwanted, form of Home Rule. Between 1921 and 1973, Presbyterians found themselves part of an authority that was under threat, and attitudes changed. Somehow, when they were in alliance with protestants with other traditions and when they could say “l’etat, c’est nous”<sup>1</sup>, resistance to constituted authority became a much less admirable thing. Nonetheless, sympathy for such resistance made a swift return in the face of subsequent direct rule by Westminster ministers.

### God’s People

Underlying this is a strand of thinking which says “We are God’s people - we have the right to do and say what we consider to be right, even in the face of the King”. Finer (1999, p238-273), in a historically based analysis of the development of government points out that the Jewish kingdoms stand alone among the polities of their time in insisting not only that the king is in no way divine, but that he too is subject to the law that all others must obey, for the law is the Law that was given by God. It was only reluctantly that Samuel (1 Samuel 8) acquiesced in the appointment of a king after pointing out the dangers of oppression that were so evident in neighbouring realms, and God characterises the very request for a king as further evidence of the backsliding to which Israel was prone. When Samuel’s misgivings proved to be amply justified, there arose in Israel prophets to challenge the king and those parts of society willing to acquiesce in, support or even encourage his misdoing. It was not an easy path to walk, as Isaiah and Jeremiah make abundantly clear in their own writings, and as chroniclers report of Elijah, but despite personal suffering they persevered. When rule of the Jews passed to gentiles, there was still a willingness among the Jews to resist pagan attempts to compel them to break their Law, whether it was the active resistance of the Maccabees against Antiochus IV and his successors, or the passive resistance of those who opposed the orders of Caligula to place his own statue in the Temple.

Jewish tradition allowed the prophet to defy the king, and this view of matters flowed through into Christian thinking throughout the persecutions of the Roman empire and during the medieval period. It was only when the authority of the monarchies increased and that of the church declined at the end of the Middle Ages that concepts such as the divine right of kings began to emerge to provide a theoretical underpinning for absolutism. As noted, Presbyterians of Scotland and Ireland claimed the right to follow the older tradition. As Alexander Henderson, the minister of Leuchars, put it when speaking as moderator of the Glasgow Assembly in 1638, “Let God, by whom Kings reign, have His own place and prerogative”. The reply of Hamilton, the King’s Commissioner in Scotland, was “Sir, ye have spoken as

<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV of France, arch-proponent of royal absolutism, famously declared “L’etat, c’est moi” (roughly, “I am the state”). When the Presbyterians were in a position collectively to take the same sort of attitude, they were exposed to the temptation of imposing a collective absolutism.

a good Christian and doubtful subject". It was this clash of loyalties which resulted, particularly in Ireland, in the exclusion and marginalization of many Presbyterians from civil society. They were turned by authority into the "Other" for their belief, and they continued to resist this tendency, by means both lawful and unlawful in terms of the law of the society in which they lived.

### **God and Caesar today**

Unfortunately, the issue they faced has not gone away. It was not to be expected that countries dominated by other beliefs and faiths, whether these are Christian in orientation or not, would be particularly sympathetic to those who claim to be God's people, with the right to follow their conscience, even in the face of the commands of authority. Some countries were more tolerant than others, of course. Some countries are moving away from their previous tolerance. A recent paradoxical development in the United Kingdom has been the imposition of a liberal and tolerant moral consensus by law. Not only is it required that the views of all must be tolerated by all, but increasingly that the living out of the views of all must be facilitated by all, regardless of their own personal views. Such universal and compulsory toleration is, of course, subject to a great many ad hoc derogations allowing explicit prohibitions of those beliefs and practices that the legislators personally happen to find immoral and repugnant (cannibalism, paedophilia and female genital mutilation have yet to commend themselves for toleration, much less facilitation). Those who do not find themselves in authority are increasingly not afforded the luxury of living their lives according to their own conscience, but will be expected to do as directed by law. This 'divine right of legislators', though few of its practitioners might approve of the term 'divine', is likely, if continued, to generate a situation where there is a clash between the consciences of Christians, individually and collectively, and the requirements of laws drafted by those who are at best, indifferent and at worst, actively hostile to Christian beliefs.

This will result in Christians being forced firstly, to choose between their own beliefs and those approved by society, and secondly, to live with the consequences if they elect for their own beliefs. This effectively will place them in the role of 'the Other'. One response then is to keep one's head down and endure in patient silence, hoping that sooner or later, things will change. Another response is to resist openly, whether this takes the form of non-violence, in the manner of Gandhi, the Christian martyrs, and the covenanters at the start, or whether it permits the use of force, in manner of the later covenanters. The Presbyterian tradition seems firmly linked to the approach of resistance to being treated as 'the Other'.

### **Reference**

Finer S.E. (1999), *The History of Government: Volume 1 Ancient Monarchies and Empires* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

# The Radical Imperative of Otherness: A New Monastic Vision of 'Being the Other' in a Context of Cultural Exile

Joshua Searle

What resources are available within my faith's texts and traditions for when I am the 'other'? This question leads us right into the heart of the existential problem of Christian identity. One helpful point of departure for theological reflection upon this problem, as this conference recognises, is the notion of 'otherness'. This paper aims to make a contribution to our theological understanding of what it means to be the other by setting out the lineaments of a radical Christian vision of otherness from the perspective of new monasticism. Underlying the reflection that follows is a conviction that new monasticism offers many practical and conceptual resources for the Christian faith community to embrace its 'otherness' not as a reluctant necessity but as a vital part of its vocation to bring renewal to the church as well as light and hope to the wider culture. For illustrative purposes I will ground my reflections in the actual texts and traditions of my own community of reference, the Northumbria Community ([www.northumbriacommunity.org](http://www.northumbriacommunity.org)), which identifies itself with the new monastic stream of ecclesial expression.

Much has been written on the origins, nature, influence and historical permutations of the monastic vision in church history. It is not my intention in this paper either to rehearse the insights made in these works or to engage in a full critical analysis of the various scholarly approaches to the study of monasticism. The aim, rather, is to sketch out a vision of what it means to be the 'other' in a contemporary context and to make a case for the ways in which the texts and traditions of monasticism can be employed towards the elucidation of a theologically robust and existentially viable conception of what it means to be the 'other' today.

Being the 'other' places us, as the Christian faith community, in a rather awkward existential predicament. The consciousness of our otherness can engender feelings of uncertainty, isolation, insecurity and a sense of alienation. This uneasy consciousness can be attributed in large part to the fact the church in the West at the beginning of the twenty-first century is in a state of crisis engendered by its exile and expulsion from the public sphere. The widespread interest in spirituality, arguably since the end of the Second World War, has been accompanied by an unprecedented decline in popular participation in organised religious practices and church membership. Seeking to express this sense of cultural exile, one of the leaders of the Northumbria Community remarked that "It feels more like exile than advancement, survival more than revival." New monasticism jettisons false hopes of imminent revival and accepts the reality of the present state of the church. Yet instead of lamenting the passing

of an alleged golden age of Christendom when the church wielded power, new monasticism offers a paradigm through which to reflect upon what has gone wrong and to ask searching questions about why God might have led the church into the desert.

The texts and traditions of new monasticism in this respect provide a valuable resource for helping the church to affirm and even celebrate its otherness. One of the greatest existential threats faced by Christian communities in the 'tolerant', 'liberal' Western world is not persecution or oppression but the threat of assimilation of their otherness into "the banal, prefabricated flux of collective sentiment." This danger was identified and addressed by the apostle Paul in his epistle addressed to the faith community in Rome, in which he admonished the church not to be conformed to the spirit of the age (Romans 12:2). Echoing Paul's timely exhortation, the new monastic vision teaches the faith community not only to accept but even to cherish its radical otherness for it is only by being the 'other' that the church is able to speak prophetically to our culture and retain a genuine hope for the world. It is in this connection that we can speak of the notion of the Christian 'imperative of otherness'.

Yet how exactly do the texts and traditions of monasticism equip Christians today to embrace this imperative of 'otherness' with conviction and integrity in a context of cultural exile? The notion of covenant, which lies at the heart of new monasticism, offers important insights into our question of how to live faithfully in a context of being the 'other'. One of the most basic definitions of a new monastic community is a group of people covenanted together within the love of Christ. Covenant is at the heart of the self-understanding of the Northumbria Community. In one document from the Community archive we find the following statement:

The Northumbria Community exists as a Community of people covenanted together within the love of God... embracing a Rule of Life... expressed in Availability and Vulnerability towards God and others.

Another document states simply that, 'Community must be about relationships, sharing our lives together.' The Community sees itself as a 'story of people whom God has brought together... journeying together in the heart, forming covenant relationships.'

As a pilgrim people of God, companions of the Northumbria Community seek to exemplify the idea of covenant in their relationships both to one another and to God. One of the basic lessons learned by the Northumbria Community, in its experience of being the 'other' in a cultural context of exile, is the notion that the heart of the Christian faith consists not in activity for God but in relationship with God. This conviction resonates with the monastic imperative of seeking God above and before all else. The opening lines of the Community's Morning Prayer, drawing inspiration

from the Psalms, express this desire to seek God: “One thing I have asked of the Lord, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple...”. From this imperative of seeking relationship with God flows the Community’s distinctive emphasis on the need to enrich human relationships through participation in a common search after God.

The Rule of Life gives expression to this common search by offering the Community a resource with which to retain the integrity of its otherness and providing a narrative framework which enables the Community to live in accordance with its fundamental convictions. In the words of one of the texts from the Northumbria Community’s novitiate programme:

A Rule of Life is absolutely essential to any monastic expression. It says this is ‘who we are, this is our story’ and reminds us of those things God has put on our hearts, and calls us back to the story that God has written as foundational.

In this instance the function of the Rule is conceived in terms of offering a coherent narrative through which to make sense of the prevailing confusion of living in disorientating times of momentous cultural transition, thus providing a way of “living faithfully in a fragmented world”. The Rule enables the Community, in its predicament of being the ‘other’, to live authentically by providing “a Way for Living in the current cultural climate, a framework that enables us to live in the Mystery and the paradox of life as ‘internal émigrés.’”

To live faithfully as the Christian ‘other’ means to live in accordance with the Christian story. The value of a Rule of Life consists in its capacity to enable Christian communities in a context of confusion, transition and exile to anchor their otherness in the Christian story, enabling believers to remain faithful to this enduring story amid all the endearing myths and novel allurements of contemporary culture. A document from the Northumbria Community affirmed that, “As a Christian Community our own story must always be measured against the Christian metanarrative, to guard against heterodoxy.” The Northumbria Community thus seeks to embrace the imperative of otherness by being conscious of the need to interpret its own story in terms of the greater Christian Story in order to prevent its core convictions from being compromised or manipulated.

Yet for all this emphasis on the ‘imperative of otherness’, new monasticism must not repeat the mistake made by many of its older expressions, which opted for complete withdrawal from the world. New monasticism must remain constantly vigilant and self-critical in order to guard against the danger of seeking to preserve its supposed moral purity within the cloister walls of a false, world-denying pietism. In other

words, the affirmation of the ‘imperative of otherness’ must not be confused as a justification for a sectarian ethic of ‘Pilatism’, which would wash its hands of moral responsibility for the fate of society. To engage with the world does not invariably involve being corrupted by or assimilated into it. The extent to which the faith community should engage with or withdraw from the so-called ‘secular’ society is one of the fundamental questions of Christian social ethics. The traditions and texts of new monasticism offer important insights into this perennial question by affirming that it is possible to remain on the narrow path between sectarian withdrawal and assimilation. By preserving its core convictions within the narrative parameters of a Rule of Life, the faith community can retain its ‘otherness’ while responding creatively to the needs and challenges of society and to love and serve the world that God sent his Son to give his life for and to redeem.

There is obviously much more that can be said about the potential of new monasticism to serve as a fresh paradigm through which the church can begin to envision its ‘otherness’ in relation to its social responsibility. Abandoning any ambition to provide a comprehensive treatment of this theme, this paper has sought to elucidate some of the main contours of a vision of radical otherness from the perspective of new monasticism and thereby to serve as a stimulus to further reflection. In the end new monasticism teaches us that being the other, although arduous and at times uncomfortable, is not a curse to be shunned or feared but a blessing to be cherished and embraced. Indeed it is only by ‘being the other’ that the church is able to be a light and hope for the world.

© Joshua T. Searle  
School of English, Trinity College Dublin

**Trevor Warner**

Theological reflection,  
Sent to Siberia,  
What freedom.

**Maithrie White**

**When I write...**  
Pick up a stray thought,  
Colour in the word picture.  
Craft the Metaphor.

# Being the 'Other' in the Context of Jewish Christian Interfaith Dialogue

Jason McCann

**Pirkei Avot 2:20** Rabbi Tarfon says: "The day is short, the task is abundant, the labourers are lazy, the wage is great, and the Master of the house is insistent." 21 He used to say: "You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it."

**Matthew 9: 37** Then he (Jesus) said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."<sup>1</sup>

Conversation is not a finished work. Religious dialogue, the moment of encounter between two distinct and complex others, cannot be, by its very nature, an undertaking tending towards its completion; save in an eschatological sense. Nowhere is this conclusion underlined more succinctly than in the Church's appreciation of its *kerygma* as 'Ever Ancient, Ever New.' Such a Christian self understanding draws attention to the tension felt in all vibrant religious communities between fidelity to ancient tradition and commitment to its *translatability* within changing modern contexts. The perception of the possibility of the end of dialogue assumes a conversation between two or more static entities - a condition which is not possible for constantly evolving human societies locked within the stream of history. John Henry Cardinal Newman gave full recognition both to the ceaseless reality of historical change and the only possibility of its changeless perfection beyond the eschatological horizon when he wrote his oft quoted dictum, 'In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus the event of dialogue presupposes discussion between communities and traditions which are continuously transforming, independent of their relationship with their prospective dialogue partners, within the dialectical process of history. Moreover, the act of dialogue and the inevitability of relationship invariably accelerate the transformation within each dialoguing tradition. Consequently both the subjects and the objects of ongoing dialogue are in a constant state of flux; demanding that dialogue is itself an ongoing process and one which must, whilst fully cognisant of the past, be undertaken anew in each generation. Such gives new

<sup>1</sup> All New Testament quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989 and revision 1995), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845, revised 1878)

meaning to the seeming futility of the object of human labour as articulated by Rabbi Tarfon in Pirkei Avot, “You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.” Any possibility of a fruitful future harvest with regard to Religious Dialogue<sup>3</sup> requires willing dialogue partnership in the present without any expectation of resolution.

Having now outlined some of the principal presuppositions of authentic dialogue, one is at liberty to progress into the primary observations of dialogue. Given the brevity of this present article one is forced to limit such to questions of *commonality and difference* – and in precisely that order. At every moment of encounter in human history there has been what Paul Ricoeur labels ‘this *curiosity* about the foreigner.’<sup>4</sup> This *curiosity* arises from the reality that ‘men of one culture have always known that there were foreigners who had different customs and different languages.’<sup>5</sup> Here one can imagine that the presence of the foreigner elicits curiosity not from essential difference but from recognition; one desires understanding of the other because one is aware of the essential *sameness*<sup>6</sup> of that other. There is an impossibility of translation between things which have otherness as their essence, for between such things there is no possibility of intelligibility or curiosity.

It is therefore the encounter with commonality and the familiar which draws one to seek an understanding of the foreigner, the alien and the other. It is at this juncture, where the desire to be understood takes on, according to Slavoj Žižek, the form of the primal trauma; where we are accosted by dissimilarity and an awareness of our own difference. Each party then constantly desires to understand the other and, in turn, be understood by the other. Christian Jewish Dialogue happens, like every other intercultural dialogue, at this moment: where both partners seek sincerely to achieve a fuller understanding of the other from their obscured sense of the other’s familiarity and in full awareness of their often radical otherness. Much in the same way that Christians are like *other* Christians whilst being different (the same can be said of Jews and other Jews), so Christianity is *like* Judaism whilst being simultaneously as different as to being completely foreign.

Deliberately echoing Moses’ vision of Yahweh on Mount Sinai (Exod. 34:8), Peter, James and John ‘fell to the ground and were overcome by fear’ while ‘up a high

<sup>3</sup>Jason McCann, the author of this article, has had extensive personal experience in the field of Interfaith Dialogue. From 2004 until 2010 he was a board member of the Youth Leadership Council of the International Council of Christians and Jews at Martin Buber House, Heppenheim in the Federal Republic of Germany. He has also acted as an ongoing facilitator for the Irish Léargas funded Youth Connections for Peace project, a project which brought about the successful Intercultural dialogue between Cross-Community Irish teenagers (from both Ireland and Northern Ireland) with their peers from various Arab Palestinian Christian Communities.


<sup>4</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p32

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>6</sup>It has been voiced that the terminology of essential sameness may be confusing (Amy Louise Daughton, personal communication, April, 4th 2011). This term has been employed in the text of the presentation, as opposed to other cognate terms such as ‘commonality,’ primarily because it demands the priority of common identity. ‘Commonality’ implies a certain quantity of shared details subsequent to the recognition of difference.



mountain' with Jesus at his Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-13). Literalist readings of these sacred scriptures serve only to do great violence to these quintessentially mystical texts.<sup>7</sup> The *cognitio dei experimentalis* (à la Aquinas)<sup>8</sup> nature of the Sinai and Transfiguration encounters is betrayed by their elevation; being as they are situated on mountains, and thus agreeing with the universal psychological commonality of the *ascent* in the mystical experience. In both Jewish and Christian tradition the (Cf. Mic. 4:2); a 'going up' or an 'ascent.'<sup>9</sup> When Jews and Christians dialogue, it is at first an acknowledgement of their shared witness to God in the world. Thus it becomes an ascent into the darkness and confusion of an encounter with the supreme other who is God. Here we are forced 'to sacrifice our comfortable and familiar concepts of knowledge, and come face to face with all that we know we cannot know.'<sup>10</sup>

Something of the isolation of the mystical ascent is captured by Clive Staples Lewis in his splendid children's story *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). At the reconciliation of Aslan (a thinly veiled Christ) and Edmund, the other children see Aslan and Edmund walking together 'apart from the rest.' Lewis continues: 'There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying, but it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot.'<sup>11</sup> Like Moses in the Exodus narrative, Peter, James and John in Saint Matthew's Gospel, and Edmund in Lewis' story, we ascend to the experience of the divine alone. In this ascent we are disconnected from our own self; insofar as we understand that *self* to be. Before God the Jew and Christian accept the absolute vulnerability of encounter; which is to say that before our maker all  (all the masks we wear, the innumerable repressions and projections which are the sum of our self-created self) are removed. Before God one stands naked of all pretence; other to the self one pretends to be.

The cat killed by the curiosity to understand the foreigner is the realisation that one, by courageously entering into dialogue, transgresses perceived sectarian boundaries and the purity taboos of the orthodoxy of one's own community. Thus by entering into an authentic and transformative dialogue with the other one becomes *tainted* and is therefore seen as *other* by the rigidity of partisan or tribal particularism.

Not only is the labourer in the field of dialogue subjected to the absolute vulnerability before God and the consequent loss of self, *qua* self-created self, and partial – if not total – alienation from his or her own home, he or she is ultimately shaken

<sup>7</sup> It is clear from the variety of textual material in the Masoretic Text (MT) and the New Testament (NT) that there are lines of scribal development in both traditions which attempt to explicate the experience of God. These redactions inevitably create variations of the 'original' account. Exodus 33:20-23 goes to some length to provide a zetetic elench to the claim that Moses spoke with Yahweh 'face to face (Exodus 33:11).'

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1 q. 43, 5, ad 2m; this is a term which Bonaventure understood to be 'wisdom,' not excluding wisdom gained from the mystical experience. See *Commentary of the Sentences of Lombard*, 3 d. 35 q. 1

<sup>9</sup> The use of Classical or Biblical Hebrew follows the text preserved in the Codex Leningradensis (c. 1008 CE) and is supplemented by the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1968-77).

<sup>10</sup> Claire E. Carroll, "Another Dodecade: A Dialectic Model of the Decentred Universe of Jeremiah Studies 1996-2008", *Currents in Biblical Research* 8.2 (2010): p175

<sup>11</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), p126

by an otherness even to God. For by accepting the *hospitality* of the foreigner one encounters the beauty of holiness lived before the God of the other. Such a traumatic sense of divorce from one's cultural acceptance or tradition of God is expressed by the Psalmist in captivity when he laments, 'How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil (Ps. 137:4)?'<sup>12</sup> So the idol crafted in our own image which one had imagined heretofore as sacred and particular to one's self and one's native community is shown to be a counterfeit of the transcendent God who escapes every claim of ownership. In this manner dialogue moves one from one exposure to another until one is brought by the experience of the other into an acute awareness of one's own otherness to self, community and to God. As nature abhors a vacuum, so such loneliness seeks resolution.

As was said above, conversation cannot end save at the final eschatological *terminus*. In like manner the radical and total alienation elicited by dialogue and encounter can have no resolution this side of the Jordan. Yet there is a consolation. Jewish and Christian Traditions situate this consolation right at the inception of the crisis; not so as to cure pre-emptively, but to ensure that we move full circle. It is the 'go' square on the board; the place we pass to collect our two hundred pounds. As one encounters the familiarity of the other in the foreigner, the familiar in the known and the self beneath the self-created self, one comes to recognize the image of God – which is both strange and familiar. This realisation, as Martin Buber would have it, moves us from an appreciation of the other as 'it' to the other as 'You.' To this end he concludes:

In truth, this dogma (accepting the world as object and the other as 'it') only leads him deeper into the slavery of the It-world. But the world of the You is not locked up. Whoever proceeds toward it, concentrating his whole being, with his power to relate resurrected, beholds his freedom.<sup>13</sup>

Liberty is made complete in both Traditions by encounter with the perfection of the image of God; the moment of *fear* before God. It is only in this final and mystical experience at the zenith of the circle that one arrives at the epiphany that the 'I' of the self too is an integral component of the *imago dei* seeking its perfection with God (and God seeking the perfection of that image in all humanity) equation. This provisional resolution (consolation) is best summed up in the Rastafarian 'I and I'; where 'I' is both You and I, and 'I' is God. Thus God is I with I. In this liberating schema I and I is *Irie*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>All quotations from the Hebrew Bible are taken from the Jewish Publication Society TANAKH translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985 and revision 1999), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>13</sup>Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Touchstone, 1996), p107

<sup>14</sup>In Rastafarian vocabulary Irie refers to positive emotions or feelings, or anything that is 'good.' Specifically it refers to high emotions and peaceful vibrations. It is a phonetic equivalent of 'all right.'

# Solidarity and the ‘Other’ in Nigerian Civic Education

Femi Oladiipo

Colonization and military dictatorship have negative effects on me and many other Nigerians born after the independence.<sup>1</sup> The issues of tribalism and religious bigotry (and a high level of poverty and corruption) continue to dominate the nation’s democratic process. Citizenship is seen first as one from an ethnic group/nation, whereby being a Nigerian is seen as secondary. This accounts for various tribal/ethnic, religious and economic wars that give rise to frequent political unrest happening in different parts of the country since independence.

This essay suggests that, from the Christian point of view, the virtue of solidarity can be used in an approach of civic education (CE) that can make use of the positive aspect of religion, to respond to the plight of the ‘other’- the neighbour, the stranger to be recognised, welcomed, and given justice.<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Levinas (1981: 11) argues that ‘the responsibility for the Other ... commands me and ordains me to the other ... and makes me approach him, makes me his neighbour’.<sup>3</sup> I shall briefly expose my experience about effects of colonization and military dictatorship before applying the virtue of solidarity to Nigerian civic education.

## Nigeria and the Challenge of Nation-building

The British ruled Nigeria from 1861 to 1960.<sup>4</sup> Before colonization, various cultural groups existed, about 400, each with its language, and/or dialects, religion, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Soon after independence, the nation experienced civil war for 30 months (1967-1970).<sup>6</sup> Till now, ethnicity and religion have affected the political stability of Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> Citizens see themselves and show their loyalty first to their ethnic groups at the expense of the nation, and only then to the nation. I and many others have

<sup>1</sup> See T. M. Bray and G. R. Cooper (1979), ‘Education and Nation Building in Nigeria since the Civil War’, *Comparative Education*, 15/1, 33. See also J. O. Fadeyiye (2008), *Social Studies for Pre-NCE, NCE and Undergraduates* (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1997) (Ibadan: Glory-Land Publishing Co.), pp.55 and 63.

<sup>2</sup> See Emmanuel Levinas, trans by Alphonso Lingis (1979), *Totality and Infinity* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers), pp. 27, 39, 47, 51 and 73-77, see also Michael Purcell (2006), *Levinas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 33, 37-39, 62 and 78.

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (1981), *Otherwise than Being Beyond Essence* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers). In another place, he says ‘the relationship with the neighbour is achieved in the practice of social justice which the Law commands, and it is the relationship with the neighbour which opens on to the divine’. Michael Purcell (2006), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> See Toyin Falolo and Matthew M. Heaton (2008), *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 85-157.

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew O. Oladeji (2006), p. 45. See also J. O. Olatunji (1998), p. 24. See also O. A. Fawole (2005), ‘National Identity’, in S. F. Ogundare (ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Citizenship Education* (Lagos: Patlove Publishing Co.), pp. 109-110.

<sup>6</sup> See J. O. Fadeyiye (2010a), *A Social Studies Text Book for Colleges and Universities* (part 1) (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2005) (Ibadan: Akin-Johnson Press and Publishers), p. 155.

<sup>7</sup> See D.A. Falade (2008), p. 17. See also J. O. Fadeyiye (2010a), *A Social Studies Text Book for Colleges and Universities*, p. 150.

been affected by long years of colonization and many years of military dictatorship.<sup>8</sup> They have been made others and arguably too, Nigeria has failed in the proper implementation of the project of civic education. The Nigerian government is still perceived largely by the people as colonial government.

### Civic Education and Nation-building

D.A. Falade defines nation building as a 'process of integrating diverse autonomous political entities within a state'.<sup>9</sup> The issue of diversity has been the major problem for integration and nation building since the creation of Nigeria from the British colony.<sup>10</sup> National consciousness is a major ingredient of nation building. This can be enhanced through CE.

### Religion and Civic Education Project

Islam shapes the culture of the people of northern Nigeria which embraced 'the Islamic culture for over six centuries before the amalgamation took place.<sup>11</sup> It can also be said that Christianity shapes the culture of the southern part of the country.<sup>12</sup> Religion, which can be considered as a force for good in society, can also be seen as a negative phenomenon. Fadeiye argues that religion 'promotes unity in the society, particularly among people of same belief or faith. The Jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804 for example has helped to promote unity among the different ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria. Also Christians in all parts of Nigeria regard themselves as brothers and sisters.<sup>13</sup> Fadeiye does not see anything bad in using force to unite believers and in killing unbelievers.<sup>14</sup> One of the problems associated with the concept of 'other' is that some versions of Islam are open to unity while others, to Jihad.<sup>15</sup> Fadeiye (2010b: 20) also shows how religious bigotry can mar nation building: 'In Nigeria, religious crises often occur within (intra) the same identical religion and between different religious beliefs...' <sup>16</sup> Using religion to discriminate against women, especially in matters of job opportunities, can also mar the development of a nation.<sup>17</sup> So,

<sup>8</sup> See George O. Ehusani (1996), *A Prophetic Church* (Ede: Provincial Pastoral Institute Publications), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> D. A. Falade (2008), 'Civic Education as a Tool for Nation Building in Nigeria', *Nigerian Journal of Social Studies* 11/1, 17. To have a successful project of nation building, it must involve the active participation of individuals, groups and organisations in the socio-political, economic, religious and cultural realms of a society.

<sup>10</sup> See M. O. Adekunle (2007), 'Citizenship Education', in Kanmi Abimbola, Olajire Olaniran, S.F. Ogundare and Dipo Gbenro (eds.), *Citizenship and Computer Education* (Oyo: OSCOED Publication), pp. 8 and 19. Before this period, the entire territory had been administered by the British separately as three administrative provinces: Northern, Western and Eastern regions. See Matthew O. Oladeji (2006), pp. 45-49.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew O. Oladeji (2006), p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> See J. O. Olatunji (1998), p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> J. O. Fadeiye, *A Social Studies Text Book for Colleges and Universities* (part 1) (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2005) (Ibadan: Akin-Johnson Press and Publishers, 2010), p. 209.

<sup>14</sup> See J. O. Fadeiye, *A Social Studies Text Book for Colleges and Universities* (part 1), 209.

<sup>15</sup> J. O. Fadeiye (2010a), p. 209.

<sup>16</sup> See J. O. Fadeiye, *A Social Studies Text Book for Colleges and Universities* (part 2) (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2005) (Ibadan: Akin-Johnson Press and Publishers, 2010), p. 20. See also J. O. Fadeiye (2010a), p. 216.

<sup>17</sup> See J. O. Fadeiye (2010b), p. 21. Also, systematic exclusion of women from partisan politics and as political office holders because of religion (especially in Islam) proves to be a negative practice in the process of nation building.

religion has been used to 'other' some people. This appears to be negative rather than positive.

Although religion is part of the curriculum for CE,<sup>18</sup> the pedagogy lacks space to dialogue or engage, to learn about the other. Discussion among students about issues of religion, to be facilitated by teachers, will help alleviate a lot of fears and prejudice from the minds of learners. Students need to be able to engage in class debate about how religion can affect public morality, since religion is part of the people's culture. This pedagogy allows the practice of loving care, compassion and tolerance in the classroom. This could be taken later to the democratic society. This will be possible if the teachers have the necessary skills to do this. It does not seem they have them. In contrast to its negative effects, one positive value of religion which can enhance CE is solidarity.

### **Solidarity and Civic Education**

Solidarity means bond of unity, of friendship, love of the other. Common to both religions and every cultural group in Nigeria, solidarity may be limited to the group. However, it can be made to be inclusive of every citizen and be encouraged to enliven the entire Nigerian society. This can welcome and engage the other in contributing to the project of integration and nation building.

From the Christian theological understanding, solidarity as a principle, an attitude or a virtue points in the direction of love and service to the other.<sup>19</sup> As a virtue, it is 'a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual'.<sup>20</sup> This is love for the other person and the environment.<sup>21</sup> It is part of the theology of God's love for human beings and the world at large.<sup>22</sup> It includes love of everyone, even enemies, thus points towards the direction of truly universal solidarity. This has helped me to forgive the colonialists and dictators, and to see the Muslims as other selves. Love of the other, received through Christ who asks me to do the same to others, has helped me to accept the colonists and dictators as fellow human beings. It has helped me to forgive them and be ready to work together with everyone for the common good of the Nigerian society. This can also help every Nigerian youth in the same situation.

<sup>18</sup> See D.A. Falade (2008), pp. 21-24.

<sup>19</sup> See Marie V. Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, A Duty? Or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* (New York: Lang, 1999), p.1.

<sup>20</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), n. 38. All quotations from papal documents are taken from the Vatican website: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) [accessed 20 October, 2009].

<sup>21</sup> See Pope John Paul II, 'Peace Message' (1990), nn.1, 6, 7. See also Benedict XVI ('Peace Message', 2010) on universal or intergenerational solidarity, nn.10, 11 and 12.

<sup>22</sup> See Jn 3.16.

Solidarity, which is the prerequisite to be true members of the Church, is also what is required to be true citizens – ‘others’, in Nigeria. It can also make one welcome others’ opinions in the project of nation building. Through solidarity apathy and lack of energy for true civic culture, caused by the experience of colonialism and military dictatorship, can be removed.

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**Charles Beattie**

not enough words  
i can say no more to you  
without engagement.

an other opinion  
must i now apologise  
for my existence?

opening the door  
live with whatever enters:  
terrifying love

## Being-the-Other: *Agapé* as an Expression of *Apatheia*

Lynn O’Gorman Latchford

In the later fourth century a desert monastic named Evagrius Ponticus systematized a way of thinking, feeling and living so the soul of one’s existence could ascend to the Divine to unite in a place of divine clarity, a spiritual sense termed *apatheia*, a place of purity of heart. Purity of heart is purity of intention, a way of loving God and others that is expressed as the Gospel love of *agapé*. For Evagrius and centuries of monastic contemplatives after him, *agapé* becomes the locus to natural science, theology and final happiness. *Agapé* is the genuine expression of *apatheia*: a translucent conscious place of authenticity that requires transit from being-in-itself to being-for-others to Being-the-Other; the metaphysical existence of absolute reality that places one in a position to be fully present and accept the other in their midst without thoughts of categorization, specificity and prejudice. This place of authenticity requires transit from being-in-itself (narcissism) to being-for-others (self exists in non-reflective consciousness but is still object for others) to Being-the-Other, the metaphysical conscious presence of absolute reality that places one in a position to fully perceive and accept the essence of the other in their midst without self-regard or objectification. When one can just “be” without imposing their will, feelings, and sensations on others to allow the essence of their being to be drawn in by others; then one can transcend the need to pull back into the carnal and base way of living bounded to sensational living that objectifies others. In sensational living, the other is not subject to you but becomes for you utility, object, and not the subject of your gift of self.

Evagrius Ponticus strove to create a school of the *praktikos*, a student of the inner life, to teach a process for conversion of heart, a daily conversation with the Divine and others that sought to purify humanity of its intrinsic link to fear and show the desert monastics a way to overcome fear with the type of love called *agapé* described in the Gospels. (Evagrius, 1981, 2006) This conversation of conversion is the process of *theosis*, the creation of an interior spiritual space rendering one receptive to Divine grace in order to attain the metaphysical conscious state of *apatheia*. The state of *apatheia* renders one free from compulsions, obsessions and addictions to that which exists outside of us. (Dysinger, 2005) *Theosis* is the process where we learn to cease striving and learn to be still, fully aware of our own existence and essence and that of the other. This is a process that endeavours to achieve renunciation of inauthentic ways of living and being in order to nurture our most simplistic, balanced and harmonious selves. *Theosis* allows the cultivation of authentic intrinsic motivations, the goal of which is to achieve *apatheia*. *Theosis* creates spaces of that higher Gospel love termed *agapé*, rather than spaces of fear which unconsciously objectifies the other in a disingenuous place of existence.

Evagrius’ work was taken up by his disciple John Cassian in the fifth century. Cassian, expanding on Evagrius, wrote *The Institutes* and *The Conferences* which contain an ethos

of transfigurative methods to purify one's outward appearance to heal inner worship. The monastic *praktikos* was to liberate individualism by cultivating humility through *praxis* (renunciation) and *theoria* (knowledge of the Divine) to inculcate the intrinsic motivation of *agap * through the mystical prayerfulness of *apatheia*, the primary locus of theology. Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century wrote a simple Rule for a community formed to be a school in the Lord's service, wherein one could not just learn Evagrian and Cassian tenets of compassionate engagement with self and others, but also learn to listen with the ear of your heart in a way that created Divine silence between self and other that allows only radical hospitality and acceptance of every other as Christ in your midst. (RB, 1952) The monastic tradition, considering Christ's life from a human point of view, is permeated by the life of the Spirit, and is fully steeped in merciful forgiveness. (Kline, 2006)

In later centuries this same theodicean strain from the monastic tradition was taken up by the Existentialist's psychoanalytical space and place of existence called by Jean-Paul Sartre, 'being-for-others' in his phenomenology, wherein the self can exist in non-reflective consciousness, not conscious of 'I', but rather absorbed into the other, pure consciousness as translucence.<sup>1</sup> (Sartre, 1957, 1991, 2003) And Jacques Derrida would later describe this space of self and other of radical acceptance, the metaphysics of presence, as 'there is no good outside the metaphysics of presence.' (Derrida, p.257) This state of *apatheia* has been described by theologians and philosophers alike as a place of conscious purity, its expression of *agap * towards others reflects Jesus' command "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (Jn 13:34, NRSV)

In this *potential* life, a life is lived without fear, what others say about us does not elicit hurt or pain or anxiety. The opportunity to create that space in us of pain is boundaried by the oblation of *agap *. And boundaried by *agap *, we do not introject feelings and thoughts that do not belong to us. (Bion, 1984) We are boundaried to the socialization of our soul by others. We meet the other in reality, precisely at where they exist. We live in the present and are present to others as subjects not objects, while simultaneously absorbing both past and future of each human interaction. In this place of absolute reality, we have transcended that place of fear. Fear is no longer an intrinsic motivating factor for living; fear of being abandoned, fear of losing the other, and fear of losing ourselves. I. M. Young argues in her influential essay, *The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference*, 'The ideal of community participates in what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence, a metaphysics that denies difference. The ideal of community presumes subjects who are present to themselves and presumes subjects can understand another as they understand themselves. It thus denies the difference between subjects.'

As subject to others, it does not matter any longer if we are not loved or cared for by them. We recognize that it is not another's 'job' to love us. If it is something that is meant

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated Hazel E. Barnes. London: Routledge, 1958, 2003; and *Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*. Translated Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick. New York: Hill and Wang, 1957, 1991, p. 42.



to happen, it will happen, as we are now still, and have ceased striving to become what can be loved by another. We are fully ourselves and therefore are gift and subject to another, not an object for their affection. This type of Gospel love, *agap *, exists in a place of no illusion, no self-deception, no introjections; but true reality, pure conscious being, a place of receptivity to Divine grace which is fully relational. Every denial of true reality is an act of suffering and is merely an illusion of suffering. Most of what we suffer from, we create within ourselves, denying the reality of situations. For instance, if someone says something that hurts us, why are we hurt? Is it because what they said is true? In that case, we should be thankful they pointed it out to us. Or if it wasn't true, then why do we allow something that is not true to bother us, when clearly it is their illusion and we only suffer when we introject their illusion? Or are they speaking from a place of intense woundedness and projecting this into us so that we accept their wounded introjections as our own? The compassionate act would be to listen with the ear of our heart to the emotion attached to their words and ask ourselves, "Is this hurtfulness they are displacing onto me?" We are only hurt when we make life about ourselves, introject the fear and woundedness of others, embody their trauma and allow pride to create a door that says, "You are the other to me."

This is not to say we should become an automaton or robotic; quite the opposite. We become more compassionate, more loving in our outlook on life and people as our intentions are purified, our intrinsic motivation is *agap *, and the metaphysics of our presence can then transcend a place of embodied trauma. We recognize the other where they exist, accepting their limitations, and their difficulties in letting go of the suffering life they live filled with objectified attachments. We forgive and forget and consequently accept their idiosyncrasies and frailties. We experience life in a new dimension that is more real, transcending the fear and anxiety that has invaded our culture and others try to create in us. This is not an easy space, this state of translucent consciousness, this process of *theosis*, to remain in. It requires tremendous mindfulness and self-control. We go up and down continuously the degrees of a continuum wherein our soul is pulled first by *epithumia*, a mostly irrational desire for all outside of ourselves in near compulsive and addictive ways, which in turn creates the tension to engage *thumos*, that indignation with ourselves because of our overreaching and ceaseless striving which eventually pulls us back into a more balanced perception of reality.

This tension occurs until we learn the lessons taught at each level of suffering we create and then we proceed to climb the soul's ascent to the Divine, which allows the divine soul within us to be purified of intrinsic fear. Finally, the up and down climbs are not as steep and we begin to level off, becoming more balanced, integrated in our being, outlook and perception. Having transcended the sensational way of being, we enter the realm of search for knowledge, truth and rationality and begin the journey of the spiritual way of being - the essence of what it is to be truly human. Participating in Divine grace, and having begun to master the physical through lessons of self-control, we go on to learn how to master the spiritual, the place of *apatheia*. At each level and degree of mastery we realize that our life is becoming more ordered, more centred, more integrated and

consequently more loving. Our perception of the world has changed. Our perspective is no longer concerned with self-regard and need, but rather gift. Not what can the world and others give us, but rather what can we give to the world? Need love becomes gift love. People are no longer objects for our use; they become the subjects of our love. It doesn't matter if they give back to us; that is not the purpose of our life any longer. From Evagrius to Benedict, from Sartre to Derrida, in *Being-the-Other* our purpose is to deny difference between ourselves as we are subjects to each other, not objects, and always 'be' loving – *agapé*, an expression of *apatheia*.

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# Space Invaders and Justice from the Fifth Dimension

Charles Beattie

There is something awe-inspiring about encountering a herd of fifty elephants in their natural habitat. Every fibre of your being is aware that you are an intruder on their turf: a space invader: their tolerance of your presence little more than a thinly veiled suspicion focused on you the outsider – the *other*. A few shuffling runs from a young bull enough to let you know who controls this space.

Space is claimed and protected like this because space is life potential.<sup>1</sup> Being on Earth is spatial being. Existence requires space for the body to occupy, space to interact with the world, space to live. We are not merely occupiers of space but consumers of space, the space required to support existence greater than that occupied by our bodily dimensions.

A simple meal involves a spatiality of greater extent and complexity than we are usually aware.<sup>2</sup> Unless we are subsistence farmers the products we consume to live are produced in spaces other than everyday living space; the space we experience only one aspect of a vast spatial network that enables our existence. Space at this level cannot be taken for granted but must be socially ordered to support and accommodate life; managing space on levels as basic as food production and shelter.

This management of space requires negotiation across a spectrum of individual and corporate spatialities ranging from the personal to the global. We each process and plan spatial existence via cognitive mapping mechanisms: the cognitive system accessing a store of conceptual information concerning spatiality to construct cognitive maps as circumstances require. On the individual level we juggle a variety of spaces such as personal-space, family-space, social-space, leisure-space, work-space and spaces of religion, politics, ideology, desire and fantasy. Multiply this by the world's population and we can recognise the existence of an intricate and dynamic network of complex personal and community spatialities that cannot be processed or managed on the individual level alone.

Space is a complex social phenomenon, one that involves not only physical space, but also the conceptual systems created and employed to organize it, and the symbolic and mythological meanings societies develop in order to live in space.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Encountering this herd of elephants in rainy season would be very unlikely as they tend to remain deep in their territory – only in dry season are they forced to come to the borders of human territory to find water. This makes every yard of space precious.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey illustrates the inherent dependence of individual spatiality by drawing attention to the fact that, "...we can in practice consume our meal without the slightest knowledge of the intricate geography of production and the myriad social relationships embedded in the spatio-temporal system that puts it upon our table." D. Harvey (1996), *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Distance*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 231f.

<sup>3</sup> M.K. George (2007), "Space and History: Siting Space for Biblical Studies", in J. L. Berquist and C. V. Camp (eds), *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography and Narrative*, London: T&T Clark, p. 15-31, p. 29.

The Old Testament texts present to us a suitably complex multi-layered approach to the theological management of Israel's spatialities in a way that hopes to allow its component individuals and communities to function together coherently.

It begins by respatializing nationalistic Israelites as global human beings; expanding the horizons of their land concept ERETZ from national territory to the whole Earth given over to human responsibility.<sup>4</sup> After human evil devastates the Earth and a fresh start is made possible by the flood they are 'placed' in the complicated dynamic of international spatiality with a purpose:

Abraham will certainly become a great powerful nation  
And all the nations will be blessed in him.  
For I have entered into relationship with him  
In order that he will instruct his children  
And his succeeding family  
So that they will keep Yahweh's way,  
Practising righteousness and justice  
In order that Yahweh will realize what he has promised him.<sup>5</sup>

Here they will be a righteous presence among the nations, preserving Yahweh's justice so that the nations will be able to experience fullness of life through Abraham's blessing rather than the terminal corruption of evil unto judgement. The management of the nation's spatialities was to embody Yahweh's principles of justice. Every family was to be ensured their place in the nation through the allocation of an inviolable family estate.

The reality recorded across the Old Testament fell short of the ideal. Numerous texts evidence the distress of those marginalized by injustice and oppression. Psalm 37 considers a key aspect of the experience of othering; spatial exclusion that threatens quality of life, livelihood and existence. One striking verse encapsulates the othering consequences of an insatiable appetite for space consumption.

I have witnessed the wicked in his tyranny –  
flaunting himself like a flourishing native.<sup>6</sup>

By asserting themselves they fill out all space around them like a herd of elephants claiming their turf, pushing out or 'othering' those already inhabiting the space as though they themselves possessed inherent, even exclusive, rights to it. In this psalm the righteous are threatened by the schemes of the wicked to dispossess them; an endeavour that this verse suggests had some measure of success.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 1:1-2:3

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 18:18-19. My Translation.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 37:35. My Translation.

The details of the injustice remain implicit and elusive, the psalmist focusing on the problem of any potential response of the righteous to this kind of despatializing othering. For the righteous choosing to adhere to the principles of Yahweh's righteousness had the consequence of rendering them powerless: the meek vulnerable other - having no recourse to any legitimate and legal process of appeal or resistance. Yet this powerlessness is to be favoured over the alternative – anxiety and anger that will motivate them to respond to their oppressor in kind, to empower themselves through evil (v1-5).

The way the psalm asks the righteous to deal with the issue is to check, and if necessary update, their cognitive spatiality by considering the fourth dimension 'time'. Anger is defused by recognizing that exclusion from space does not entail exclusion from the greater spatiality of Spacetime. The flourishing of the wicked is temporary. In a matter of time they will be cut-off or disinherited and the righteous will repossess their rightful place in the land. In spacetime the spatiality imposed by the wicked is unsustainable while the place of the righteous will be perpetuated.

The reason that this view of spacetime was embraced within the canon as a substantial encouragement rather than naïve wishful-thinking was because the faithful of Israel accepted there was more to spatiality than meets the eye. Justice is not merely an activity within spacetime but is practically part of the fabric of reality; so indispensable a dimension of spatiality that spatial existence is neither conceivable nor sustainable without it. Israel's prayer for their monarch was not 'God save the King!' but that the king would bring shalom to the earth as a faithful mediating instrument of Yahweh's justice.<sup>7</sup>

The centrality of Yahweh's justice in Israel's spatiality is manifest in his enthronement in the temple. Hope remained invested in Yahweh's throne as the messianic ideal failed to actualize and the righteous in Israel experienced instead the land-grabbing othering reality of institutionalised injustice.<sup>8</sup> Yahweh himself was victim of despatializing othering as the invasion of his royal space with other gods filled the land with violence. As the temple fell to Babylonian space invaders Ezekiel was granted a glimpse of another dimension, a co-existent heavenly reality.<sup>9</sup> Here he

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 72.

<sup>8</sup> The restraint of Psalm 37 in avoiding explicitly articulating the injustice along with succinct statements of faith in Yahweh's protection and provision has seen it marginalised as a naïve product of a time of prosperity and stability. Israel, however, did not abandon the psalm in times of crisis and turmoil, retaining its place in their psalter through the turbulence of exile as they voiced doubt and despair at their apparent disinheritance and rejection by Yahweh for perpetuity. In this context the Deuteronomistic History looked back over a period in which institutional injustice was always present; whether in the corruption such as that of Eli's and Samuels' sons, the impotence of David to deal with the crimes of Joab or his sons Aamon and Absalom, or the threat of tyranny such as David's injustice against Uriah or Ahab's seizing of Naboth's inheritance. Israel came to recognise that while the individual might suffer loss of life and land God was nevertheless actively preserving a righteous remnant and prophecies like that of Micah. In these contexts the justice system that was supposed to protect the vulnerable was twisted against them.

<sup>9</sup> Ezek. 8:1-11:25.

saw Yahweh, unrestrained by the parameters of three-dimensional space, vacate the temple spatiality of Israel without vacating his throne. From this came a prophecy of hope: as corrupt officials in Jerusalem claimed rights to the exiles' land, Yahweh passed judgement on them while promising restoration of a righteous remnant from exile.

As a child, dealing with space invaders was simple. You dodged the bullets, kept hammering the fire button and hoped you took out as many of the descending horde as possible before the inevitable. When faced with othering space invaders in various real-life contexts anger may tempt us to map the situation in the same way. Psalm 37 brings a vast biblical spatiality to a point by telling us that such a response is incompatible with reality ordered by Yahweh.

From birth my space was mapped by traditions inherited through Ulster Protestantism. I have felt the anger and anxiety of despatializing othering as my place in the world was violently contested and threatened. Studying the biblical text, however, I became aware that its spatiality conflicted with aspects of my inherited spatiality.

Within theological tradition a long history of dualistic tendencies and selective spiritualization has produced a warped theological filter through which reduced aspects of biblical spatiality are absorbed without inconveniently challenging many of our vested spatialities. God's redemptive love for the cosmos is reduced to a borderline narcissistic, 'For God so loved wee Jimmy'.<sup>10</sup> Justice or 'righteousness' is abstracted from five-dimensional reality and reduced to my sin and its forgiveness, or the others' sin and its punishment. The God-humanity-earth biblical spatiality is reduced to a God-me spatiality with earth a loose-end free to attach to any vested interest. The heavenly fifth dimension, meanwhile, is effectively marginalized as it is conceptualized in terms of radical transcendence or discontinuity – spatially 'up' or 'out there somewhere' and spatially and temporally 'after' earth.

The failure to recognize the need to integrate our spatialities in life, theology and faith creates something of a cognitive disconnect. Conceptually and practically speaking we manage to keep our vested spatialities and our 'spiritual' spatialities separate, making some crucial texts difficult to accommodate: "Blessed are the meek...", "love your neighbour...", "love your enemies...", "vengeance is mine...", "live at peace with everyone..."<sup>11</sup> These texts get marginalized and lost precisely when they are most relevant if we do not already have a spatiality that will warp our spacetime to accommodate them.

<sup>10</sup> Jn. 3:16 is supposed to read, "For God so loved the cosmos..."

<sup>11</sup> I speak here from experience growing up in the Protestant-Catholic conflict of Northern Ireland and working in the context of Muslim-Christian conflict in Jos, Nigeria. Mt. 5:5 referencing Psalm 37; Mt. 22:37-40 referencing Lev. 19:18,33; Mt. 5:44; Rom. 12:19 referencing Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:18.

Paul embraced the fact that following Christ entails a radical respatialization, reconfiguring his nationalistic spatiality to accommodate gentiles in a Kingdom Christianity in which the spatiality of the divine throne is contemporaneously and continuously central to all spatiality. The messianic salvation is nothing less than the just and righteous management of all created space: Christ is enthroned in the heavenlies and bringing all things under his authority; we have been raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenlies.<sup>12</sup> We are now citizens of a five-dimensional kingdom, better equipped to face despatializing othering with integrity when we allow the biblical text to map our lives across all five dimensions.

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### Matt Scrimgeour

metanoia now  
love divine neighbour self too  
mimesis god man

come & see speaks christ  
walk worship work by wind power  
live full life in me

quare reconcile earth  
heaven now & not yet here  
shape we now & then

now an other glimpsed  
in the end we are the same  
mercy lived by me

<sup>12</sup> Romans 8; Ephesians 1; Eph. 2:6.

# Restoring Original Settings: Other as Christian Norm?

Fran Porter

In Northern Ireland in particular many people are deeply sensitized to the notion of the other. In the political arena, in community relations work, in various inter-church encounters, and in personal stories, many of us know about the other. It has become a characteristic tool of analysis and praxis in a variety of peace-making endeavours.

We know about the offence of conceptualizing and labelling people as others – what Letty Russell has called the process of ‘othering’, which she defines as ‘social structures and interactions that divide the world into subjects and objects and often demean, disgrace or destroy the ones who are objects or others’.<sup>1</sup>

We can enact othering by our choice of language but we know it is more complex than whether the term other is used. A few years ago a DSD research project about different religious groups’ engagement with government and civil society used the terms Christian and non-Christian faith groups.<sup>2</sup> While succinct terms which are readily understood, defining people by what they are not, and particularly by their not being part of the dominant group, can be a form of othering, however unintentional. Around the same time as the DSD work was being undertaken, I was involved in research looking at how Protestant and Catholic churches were responding to Northern Ireland’s increasing diversity of ethnic, religious and sexual identity, a diversity which was reconfiguring Northern Ireland’s majority/minority dynamic. In that work, in the Northern Ireland context, we defined minority religious populations as those who belonged to world religions other than the Christian religion. This was done in an attempt to counteract the tendency that the use of the term minority has in emphasizing marginal status and in recognition that many Muslims and Hindus have a sense of belonging to a world-wide faith even while being part of minority populations here. So, while in Northern Ireland our work at avoiding othering is an ongoing process that we are still learning, and we know that tone and attitude can be as important as the words we use, we are deeply sensitized to the need for a mindset that humanizes the so-called other.

The notion of other has fired theological imaginations particularly in conflict situations where reaching out to the other and overcoming barriers of difference is integral to pursuing pathways of peace. Rooted in both philosophical thought and psychoanalytic theory, the concept of other also has strong biblical precedent. Care for the alien and stranger, the unknown other, over whom the Lord watches, is

<sup>1</sup> Letty M Russell (2006), ‘Encountering The “Other” In a World of Difference and Danger’. *Harvard Theological Review*, 99, (4), 457-68, p. 458.

<sup>2</sup> Arlington Trotman (2007), ‘Non-Christian Faith Groups’ Engagement with Government and Civil Society in Northern Ireland’. Belfast: DSD.



part of the texture of Israelite society in the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> And this is part of the foundation that underpins Jesus' call that we should love our enemies rather than retaliate with violence to the other.<sup>4</sup> The basis for this stance is that the Israelites were once strangers and aliens themselves<sup>5</sup> and we were all once estranged from God who has reconciled us to Godself.<sup>6</sup> Marc Gopin considers that 'the state of the stranger is the litmus test of any society's fundamental goodness or fundamental evil.'<sup>7</sup>

Intriguingly, however, at this conference we are entering the dynamic between host and other, between subject and object, from the point of view of the latter rather than the former. We are being asked to put ourselves in the position of the other, to live there for a while, and search our texts and traditions for resonance with otherness.

We are given this task partly to explore and unsettle the inherent power we can have in relationships where we reach out to the other. In a recent report looking at faith and social cohesion in Bradford, England, the practice of hospitality was considered the most basic and most unequal form of bridging social capital contact activity (that is, people connecting with those from different ethnic or religious backgrounds to their own) because of the greater power that rested with the host and not the guest.<sup>8</sup>

The other reason for the focus on being the other is the appearance of a discourse about Christians as the new persecuted in contemporary society. Last year, 1st December was designated 'Not Ashamed Day' by Christian Concern<sup>9</sup> who used it to launch their Not Ashamed campaign, which is about organizing and supporting Christians in becoming vocal and visible about the 'Christian foundation of our nation, motivated by the conviction that Jesus Christ is good news not just for individuals or for the church but for society as a whole. Indeed, He is the only true hope for our nation.'<sup>10</sup> Their symbol is a simple cross within a speech bubble, encapsulating the idea that Christians should be speaking up and out for Christian faith. The aim is to protect the place Christianity has in British society against general erosion and deliberate attack, the evidence of which they believe is demonstrated in various employment cases and legal rulings against Christians because of wearing Christian symbols in public, praying for service users, and non-compliance with equality provisions relating to people who are gay and lesbian.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Exodus 22:21-27; Deuteronomy 27:19; Psalm 146:7-9.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:38-48.

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 10:19; 24:19-22.

<sup>6</sup> Colossians 1:21.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Gopin (2002), *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ghazala Mir, John Lawler, and Mary Godfrey (2010), 'Women, Faith and Social Cohesion: Models for Building Cohesive Communities'. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Previously Christian Concern for Our Nation, <http://www.notashamed.org.uk>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.notashamed.org.uk/about.php>, (accessed 7 March 2010).

Leaving aside for the moment (and I shall return to it later) the extent to which this analysis is correct – whether Christians are becoming increasingly marginalized, discriminated against, harassed, even persecuted in British society<sup>11</sup> – at this conference we are being asked to imagine ourselves in such a position where we are other, which may be because of our faith or because of some other aspect or aspects of our identity, or perhaps a combination of both.

The task of the conference is, therefore, quite a challenge. It can be hard to recognise the strength of our position as host to others, partly because our offers of hospitality are often made in generosity and out of genuine concern to be welcoming. It also may be that we do not feel powerful but rather nervous or unsure in our gestures. And there are occasions when our reaching out is done from a position of perceived or actual weakness, and we feel we are on shaky ground because the other we reach out to is actually the one with the power. Or we may in fact have an inbuilt empathy with the other, regardless of the nature of their otherness, because of our own experience of inhabiting the status of other. In the research about Northern Ireland's increasing social diversity I have already mentioned, one contributing factor that emerged in people's reaching out to minority populations was their own experiences of feeling different, being the odd one out, the one who didn't fit, particularly when they were young, as well as experiences of life in foreign cultures in which they were in the minority, which had left them acutely attuned and receptive to the presence of others, regardless of the nature of the otherness in question.<sup>12</sup>

Arguably, in Northern Ireland, the conflict has been constructed as between competing others. At its worst, this has become, at times, a competition for victim status; although, as I have said, our locating label within the island of Ireland is not the only form of othering we may experience. Our task at this conference is not to feed any sort of victim mentality but to attempt to position ourselves differently in the prism of faith, and thereby unearth riches from our texts and traditions that we might otherwise overlook.

Such repositioning can be hard for Christians in this increasingly plural society to do because we stand upon a legacy of inherent power. And it is in the nature of a privileged position sometimes not to be able to see the advantages of it. We may begin to get a sense of a different perspective if we look at the contrasting experience of Christians in the first 300 years of the church.

<sup>11</sup> On Chanel 4's 4thought.tv, Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali stated, 'the marginalization, discrimination, and harassment which Christians are now facing in this country is a kind of persecution', <http://www.4thought.tv/4thoughts/0154-Bishop-Michael-Nazir-Ali-Are-Christians-the-new-persecuted->, (accessed 17 March 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Fran Porter (2008), 'Faith in a Plural Society: The Values, Attitudes and Practices of Churches in Protecting Minority Participation'. Belfast: CCLI, pp. 42-44.

In terms of the Greco-Roman Empire of antiquity, Christians in the first three centuries, who initially were regarded as another Jewish sect by both Jews and Gentiles, shared with the Jewish population the position of other. As John Drane comments, 'though in some circles in the Roman Empire the Jewish religion was respected, on the whole the Jews living in Palestine were regarded as an incomprehensible, fanatical and unbalanced race.'<sup>13</sup> Christians themselves were said to be insane because they worshipped a crucified criminal as their king, something beyond the comprehension of the Romans who reserved crucifixion for the lowest of the low. Christians were mocked for their crucified saviour. Preaching Christ crucified was indeed, as Paul said, foolishness to the Greeks.<sup>14</sup>

Within a generation of Jesus' death, to be a Christian was to be part of a proscribed *superstitio* or superstition, that is, an illicit religion. By the second century, only baptized believers and catechumens (those undergoing instruction in the faith) were allowed into Christian gatherings, and deacons would stand at the door preventing potential spies and informers from entering. Only baptized believers attended the Eucharistic component of services, while catechumens attended only for the readings and teachings part of worship.<sup>15</sup> This was an age when imprisonment and death were penalties for public expressions of faith. This secrecy was the cause of speculation and rumours about what went on in Christian assemblies. They were thought to be cannibals, because they ate flesh and drank blood. They were said to engage in lustful incest, because as brothers and sisters they loved one another. They were considered reprobates and social subversives because they included 'illiterates from the dregs of the populace and credulous women with the instability natural to their sex'.<sup>16</sup>

There is, of course, truth in the assertion that Christian communities challenged norms of accepted social respectability. Christians were not just other because of who they worshipped, or rather, did not worship in the case of following the gods of the Roman Empire whose favour it was believed was necessary for society's well-being. They were other because of the way they behaved, which for the Christians was, in part, how they worshipped or how they ascribed worth to God. As Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider comment, 'Our words may ascribe worth to God but our life choices may indicate that our deepest concerns are estranged from those of God.'<sup>17</sup> The worth the Christians in the first three centuries ascribed to God who had been made known to them in Jesus Christ was reflected in the way they lived as Jesus' followers. So, for example, their widespread refusal to serve in the Roman army was not simply

<sup>13</sup> John Drane (1986), *Introducing the New Testament*. Tring, Herts: Lion publishing, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:23.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> The view of the pagan Caecilius recorded by Minucius Felix in *Octavius*, cited in Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*. p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider (2009), *Worship and Mission after Christendom*. Milton Keynes, Colorado Springs, Hyderabad: Paternoster, p. 7.

because they would not worship the Roman gods, but because they would not kill.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship of Christians to the state military in the early centuries is a very good illustration of their otherness, and of what happened when they later became the ones doing the othering. Many early Christians embodied their opposition to bloodshed by not serving in the military. According to Roland Bainton, 'From the end of the New Testament period to the decade of A.D. 170-180 there is no evidence whatever of Christians being in the Army.'<sup>19</sup> He argues it is probable that abstention from army service was taken for granted in the church and hence there are no church statements during that time prohibiting Christians' military involvement.<sup>20</sup> After this period there is evidence of Christians enrolled in the army, although it is not possible to quantify their involvement.<sup>21</sup> This change in practice is matched by specific instructions from Christian writers against joining the military.

Christian leaders in the third century were quite clear that warfare was incompatible with Christian profession. For Tertullian, writing in 211, on becoming a believer, a man must leave the army, which he stated many had done.<sup>22</sup> The Apostolic Tradition, also from the early third century, allowed existing soldiers to begin instruction in Christian faith only if they promised not to kill. If they did take life or if a civilian catechumen or baptized Christian joined the military, they were to be rejected because in doing so they had despised God.<sup>23</sup> Similarly at the beginning of the fourth century, the Christian apologist Lactantius declared Christians should not enter military service, stating it was always wrong to kill.<sup>24</sup> For this stance, some lost their lives. In 295, twenty-one year old Maximilian was executed for his refusal to serve in the army. 'I cannot serve as a soldier,' he said, 'I cannot do evil. I am a Christian.'<sup>25</sup> As Arnobius wrote, Christians had learned from the precepts and laws of Christ 'to shed our own blood rather than to stain our hands and conscience with the blood of another.'<sup>26</sup>

In the first three centuries, Christians who would not kill were themselves being killed because of their faith. Each century saw particular periods of intense persecution initiated by emperors that took away the Christians' possessions, freedom and often lives. An abrupt change occurred at the beginning of the fourth century when in 312 the emperor Constantine chose not simply to tolerate but to adopt Christianity

<sup>18</sup> Roland H Bainton (1961), *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp. 77-8; Alvin John Schmidt (1989), *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology*. Macon, Georgia, USA: Mercer University Press, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Roland H Bainton (1961), *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>20</sup> Roland H Bainton (1961), *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace*, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> Roland H Bainton (1961), *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace*, pp. 70-2.

<sup>22</sup> Alvin John Schmidt (1989), *Veiled and Silence*, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> Alvin John Schmidt (1989), *Veiled and Silenced*, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Alvin John Schmidt (1989), *Veiled and Silenced*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Roland H Bainton (1961), *Christian Attitudes to War and Peace*, p. 73.

as the religion of the Empire and thereby end the persecution of Christians and set a precedent that nearly all subsequent emperors followed. Questions about Constantine's motivations in his favouring Christianity are not the issue here. Coming as it did in the context of 'the bloodiest, most destructive persecution Roman officials had ever inflicted on the Christian Church',<sup>27</sup> it came as a great relief to the church. This new found favour was welcomed by believers, as it brought to an end the terrible persecutions they had been suffering. It appears that Constantine's belief that proper reverence to the one God brought the greatest possible benefit to the state was matched by church leaders' convictions that Constantine's actions were authorised by God.

The seeds of Christendom that were planted with Constantine's legitimization of Christianity, however, changed the church's previous uncompromising stance against taking life. By the second half of the fourth century, stringent proscriptions against involvement in combat situations were absent from the instruction for enquirers and new believers. As early as 314, probably as a gesture of reciprocity to Constantine for his decriminalizing of Christianity a year earlier, the Synod of Arles barred soldiers who refused to serve in the army in peace time from receiving the Lord's Supper. In July 324 when Constantine went to fight Licinius, his one outstanding imperial rival, bishops, dressed in full regalia, prayed to God on behalf of Constantine's army. For John Chrysostom in Antioch in the 380s, 'Military service presents no hindrance to virtue the man who is willing to be sober'.<sup>28</sup> Athanasius (also fourth century) believed, 'It is not lawful to kill. But to destroy adversaries in war is legal and worthy of praise.'<sup>29</sup> And in 416, one hundred years on from the turning point of Christians going from being outlawed as part of a minority, illicit, superstitious religion to an accepted and increasingly favoured part of the empire, an imperial edict determined that only Christians could join the army. It was also in the fifth century that Augustine articulated a Christian just war concept that influenced the church throughout the centuries and continues to do so in present post-Christendom times. The swords that at the beginning of the second century had, according to Justin Martyr, been turned into ploughshares, and spears into implements of tillage, three hundred years later were weapons of war once more.

Indeed, Christians who had once been others became, in concert with the emperor, the ones doing the othering as Christianity became first the dominant and then the only legitimate religion of empire. Constantine simply adhered to the traditional Roman imperial pattern of taking responsibility for the religion of the state, which was now Christianity, or more accurately, a Catholic Christianity in the sense of mainstream orthodoxy. Constantine's involvement is epitomized in Eusebius's description of him

<sup>27</sup> David L Dungan (2006), *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament*. London: SCM Press, p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Alvin John Schmidt (1989), *Veiled and Silenced*, p. 24.

as a 'universal bishop'.<sup>30</sup> Constantine called and directed the business of church councils. Ironically, the first two he initiated, Rome in 313 and Arles in 314, sought to resolve the dispute within the North African church which had arisen, in part, over differences about the fallout for the church of the recent Great Persecution. The issue was whether forgiveness was possible for those who had renounced their faith under persecution, and who was a worthy leader with the authority to offer that forgiveness. A disputed episcopal election in Carthage resulted in two contenders for bishop, with both church councils supporting Caecilian, suspected of either being ordained by or being himself a traditor (someone who handed over copies of scriptures during persecution) by other bishops who elected an alternative candidate (Majorinus) who was succeeded by Donatus. The Donatists' refusal to accept the two councils' decision about who should be bishop led to Constantine ordering their leaders into exile and confiscating their churches, something that had to be enforced militarily resulting in the death of one Donatist bishop and thus becoming the 'first official persecution of Christians by Christians'.<sup>31</sup>

In the decades that followed, so-called heretical Christian groups had their places of worship and their books confiscated and were banned from public acts of worship. Similarly, pagan rituals were outlawed and their temples stripped of their statues, gold and silver. Pagan worship became what Christian worship had once been – a *superstitio*, 'denoting an intolerable deviation from society's norms of behavior.'<sup>32</sup> The same edict that meant only Christians could join the army (issued in 416) also outlawed pagans from the civil service. Then in 529 the emperor Justinian issued an edict making conversion – including the baptism of all infants – compulsory. The Jews were the one exception to this compulsion, at times being tolerated, at other times persecuted, but always being constructed as other. For everyone else, Christianity became mandatory. As Augustine said, 'For long, Christians did not dare answer a pagan; now, thank God, it is a crime to remain a pagan'.<sup>33</sup>

Attitudes and actions with regard to taking life – or rather, not taking life – were not the only distinguishing marks of Christians in the first three centuries. As evidenced in the early church,<sup>34</sup> caring for the poor was an integral part of Christian behaviour. In the second century, Justin Martyr wrote, 'we who once took most pleasure in the means of increasing our wealth and property now bring what we have into a common fund and share with everyone in need'.<sup>35</sup> In the Apostolic Tradition, attentiveness to the poor and needy was the primary area in which catechumens

<sup>30</sup> Cited in David L Dungan (2006), *Constantine's Bible*, p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch (2009), *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. London: Allen Lane, pp. 212.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37, 6:1-6.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 5.

were to manifest change before proceeding to baptism.<sup>36</sup> It was said of the aristocrat Cyprian of Carthage that as a catechumen he loved the poor and as a Bishop he lived simply and hospitably with his home open to the poor. The first of his 120 precepts derived from the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament writings concern the benefit of good works and mercy.

The Christians broke down other social barriers. The words of what is considered by many to be an early Christian baptismal confession – ‘There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’<sup>37</sup> – were embodied in their behaviour. When, in Rome in 165, Justin Martyr and some of his companions were tried and condemned to death because they would not sacrifice to the Roman gods, they consisted of a diverse group of ‘both sexes, slave and free, of Cappadocian and Phrygian as well as Roman birth’.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in 203, incarcerated in Carthage during the persecution of the emperor Septimius Severus, a group of believers made up of well-born and common, of slave and free, of women and men, subverted social norms by exchanging a kiss of peace in the amphitheatre before being martyred, having made their last meal in imprisonment an agape meal together.<sup>39</sup>

Before their increased social respectability in which being a Christian was advantageous to social advancement; before clergy began being paid by state funds and living in grand villas as befitted their status as state officials; before churches were built with imperial money, designed along the pattern of the imperial audience hall, from which church leaders presided, dressed in regal splendour; before, in other words, Christian faith was no longer an impediment not only to life and liberty but to social advantage, economic prosperity and overall well-being, Christians were constructed, and indeed lived, as other in the Roman Empire.

Despite the adverse conditions, it was a time when the church grew. There is general agreement that, at the point when Constantine legalized Christianity, about ten percent of the imperial population were Christian. This suggests an average growth rate of 40 percent per decade in the first three centuries. As Alan Kreider comments, ‘That is impressive. Despite disincentives, despite the scorn of the powerful, despite persecutions, the early Christian movement was growing. Something was deeply attractive about it.’<sup>40</sup>

It is an interesting and sobering question to ponder, what would be attractive about contemporary expressions of Christian faith in our various contexts? To do so brings

<sup>36</sup> Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> Galatians 3:28.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Passio Perpetua* 21 and 17 <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.html> (accessed 14 March 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Alan Kreider (1999), *The Change of Conversion*, p. 10.

us back to the present day, and our increasingly diverse and plural society, which, as mentioned earlier, some consider increasingly hostile to Christian faith. What is perceived by some as modern day persecution, however, can hardly be compared to the situation of the first generations of Christians. What is happening now is rather the disorientating experience of a more level playing field in society that is occurring as a period of centuries of Christian privilege and presumption is waning. Jonathan Bartley, who, in 2005, anticipated that Christians' loss of privilege in society would result in some increasingly adopting the language of persecution,<sup>41</sup> is currently examining many of the recent cases where discrimination against Christians has been claimed and finding no evidence to substantiate the claims.<sup>42</sup>

The discourse, however, is likely to remain with us and as such invites the question, what if? What if, because of our faith, we found ourselves as other, from what resources in our texts and traditions can we draw? And, also, how do they help us in breaking down the binary oppositional construction inherent in othering that puts us in positions of power when we are host rather than other? This is our imaginative task together at this conference. While to view ourselves as other is perhaps strange to us, I have endeavoured to demonstrate it would not have been to the first generations of Christians, for whom being other was normal. That tells us that our texts and traditions do indeed have plenty to say to us in such circumstances because they sustained a church that inhabited the status of other for three hundred years. It might also suggest that what we learn about Christian formation, faith and life from our explorations is not only applicable for those times when we are the other, but belongs rather more centrally in Christian experience and understanding than currently may be the case.

© Dr Fran Porter

**Eamonn Walls**

So confident, so  
sure when all is said and done  
how can we know it?

**Femi Oladiipo**

Pater Noster sung very loud  
To cover the wailings of slaves groaning  
Two sides of the colonists

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Bartley (2006), *Faith and Politics after Christendom: The Church as a Movement for Anarchy*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press.

<sup>42</sup> As well as working through the evidence and misrepresentations that have surrounded specific instances, he is exploring some of the social and theological dynamics behind the current persecution discourse. The research will be published through [www.eklesia.co.uk](http://www.eklesia.co.uk).



# Third Isaiah and Otherness

Glenn Jordan

If you want to be free, there is but one way; it is to guarantee an equally full measure of liberty to all your neighbours. There is no other.  
Carl Schurz *US (German-born) general and politician 1829-1906*

## The Otherness of Inner East Belfast

The inner East Belfast community where I work has experienced more than its fair share of conflict over the years of the Troubles, leaving it one of the most economically and socially deprived communities in the whole of Northern Ireland.

Recognising the formidable challenge to regenerate East Belfast, government departments, statutory bodies and community agencies combined to produce a range of urban masterplans which promised an utterly transformed landscape for people who had suffered through the worst of the previous four decades.

The documents, drawings and presentations are overflowing with the language of renewal and transformation, with visions of how things should be and could be but most patently aren't. The visions presented are impressive and often inspiring, but local people remain largely sceptical and even disapproving; outsiders to the changes happening all around them.

My task over the last 11 years has been to learn to walk with this community as together we have sought to become skilled at employing the tools of regeneration and in engaging the official voices of community renewal. One of the things I have learned during this period is that when a community has been marginalized and its voice silenced for so long, its marginalisation robs it not just of the social capital required for advancement, but also of the imaginative capacities necessary to describe a future with hope.

## The Threat of Newness in Third Isaiah

Chapters 56-66 of Isaiah, generally known as Third Isaiah, address the community of exile recently returned to Jerusalem. They found a city where familiar patterns of worship and culture had been interrupted and those that remained were in need of adaptation to a new time. The city, which had so lately been rebuilt, was a mean representation of its remembered greatness and the community, still reeling from the dislocation of exile, seems utterly incapable of bearing the burden of imagination necessary for regeneration.

What is to be done with a people whose experience of displacement is such that it has robbed them even of the vocabulary necessary to articulate newness?

For both Jerusalem and inner East Belfast, and particularly the Loyalist community of inner East, the folk memories of what has been lost are the shackles which hold them in thrall to the past. So there is a painful dilemma in these words of Isaiah:

“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”  
Isa. 65.17-19 (NIV)

It may very well be that Jerusalem hears this promise not as something to bring joy, but rather, in their depressed state clinging for cold comfort to the wreckage of their past, these words are heard instead with some alarm. When all you have are ‘former things’ who would want to let them go, to embark on a process of un-remembering? What could possibly bring comfort to replace the thin blanket of what used to be?

Yet the prospect of Jerusalem, or inner East Belfast, being a delight and its people a joy is compelling. The prophet announces this as being entirely the work of God, yet there are in Third Isaiah as a whole startling challenges to residents of Jerusalem and, I believe, of inner East Belfast, which, if embraced, will lead to newness. However, this embrace is not without risk.

### **The Risk of Embrace**

I want to examine briefly just one of those challenges which appears, curiously enough, right at the beginning of Third Isaiah,

Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.” And let no eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree.” For this is what the LORD says: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant—to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” The Sovereign LORD declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel: “I will gather still

others to them besides those already gathered.”

Isa. 56.3-8

It seems that for the returned exiles of Jerusalem there is a dispute over who belongs. In the past there was great security in a system which clearly delineated those who belonged and those who were ‘the Other’ and some held out for a return to the good days when you knew your own sort. In their present parlous state, these people believed that lines needed to be drawn to ensure there was no room for the uncongenial, for those of alien blood or those who were dysfunctional in any way.

But the prophet will not have it, and sees that there is a liberation deeper and more profound, and perhaps more difficult to achieve, than liberation from the hand of a political or military oppressor like Babylon.

What Isaiah does here is to set aside commands of the Torah found in Deut 23:1-8 that exclude foreigners and eunuchs. In relation to eunuchs the word is clear,

No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD.

Deut. 23.1

But circumstances change. It may be that the instruction in Deuteronomy is to discourage pagan practices of the time whereby some make themselves priests through an act of physical mutilation. But after defeat by Babylon, many of the brightest and best of Israel were forcefully castrated by the empire, and many of these rose to the highest ranks in the government.

In any social renewal there is a practical need for their skills, but there may be more here than that. The reality in Isaiah is that the community feeling the dislocation of exile must find common cause with the eunuch. For in drawing close to the eunuch in his perceived disordered state, the citizens of Jerusalem are learning about their own current state of otherness, their own humanity and identity which they felt had been lost in exile and was being un-remembered in the regeneration.

In the restored community, they are told, there is always a place for those committed to the doing of justice and righteousness and common cause can be made between those previously alienated by ethnic, religious and physical differences. In this way the community will reflect the work of God, for the One who gathers the exiles also says, “I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”

But this, it seems to me, is unbelievably hard to take for those who are most aware

of their outsider status. There is incredible comfort in the knowledge that though I may be at odds with a world which has so shamefully treated me, God has in mind to gather me safely. This is significant because as ‘the Other’, I yearn to be familiar to someone. But then to hear that God is not exhausted by the task of gathering me and mine but also wants those who had previously served to marginalize me so that even the place of worship is shared—a house of prayer for all nations! It almost feels like a cruelty for this is no sentimental word promising everything will be all right at the end, nor a word of vengeance promising a comeuppance for my enemy. This is a hard, concrete reality for those who feel their otherness most deeply.

### **The Challenge of Otherness**

So what about inner East Belfast?

The message seems to be that when one makes room for another, when two outsider communities embrace in the common task of renewal, newness is possible. It requires, though, a tremendous act of faith. So what do I learn?

Isaiah teaches me that in a culture that orders itself around borders and barriers, where inside and outside are defined by gender or sexuality, by nationality or ethnicity, or even by the brands I consume or the sports I play, the new community that God wills is one where no-one should experience the cold shoulder of being ‘the Other’.

It teaches me that as ‘the Other’, though there is a temptation to seek out the company of those who are like me for the sake of common defence, I must be willing to review my traditional rules of demarcation and to make space for those who are my established ‘Others’.

It teaches me the possibility that, where one outsider finds grace to make space for another, some strange multiplier effect can operate. Isaiah teaches me that whilst we begin in trying to reorder our community, our town or city, we end up participating in the renewal of the whole cosmos, co-creating a world where the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, where there will no longer be any child born who is doomed to misfortune nor an old man who does not live out his years. But it begins when I find the strength and the faith, in my state of otherness, to make room.

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# Spiritual Diaspora

Paula Tabakin

ברוך אתה יי' אלהינו מלך העולם משנה את הבריות

Thank you Hashem our G-D, Source of life and blessing , for the wondrous diversity of creation<sup>2</sup>

The question addressed in the Irish Peace Centres project asks, ‘What is there from within our respective texts and traditions that sustains us when we are the Other?’ I wish to answer the question by drawing attention to a number of practices within Judaism that help sustain Jewish identity even in Diaspora.

The word Diaspora started as a term for Jews who had been expelled from Israel and surrounding areas after the Roman occupation of Judea in the first and second centuries AD. When the state of Israel was established in 1948 the term was used to describe all Jews living outside of Israel. Hebrew refers to these Jews as Living in ‘Galut’ (Exile) and this is still a commonly used description. The Word ‘Tfotzot’ (Scattered) was introduced in the 1930s by the American academic Simon Rawidowicz<sup>3</sup> and this term suggests that life outside of Israel is an inevitable part of the journey of the Jewish people. Indeed there is an ongoing discussion within Judaism as to whether we (Jews) are just a religion, or a nation with an ethnic identity. These terms to do with Diaspora and the debates that surround them are symbolic of how varied and complex contemporary Jewish thinking is, especially in reference to our relationship with Israel. While a discussion about Israel is not the topic of this paper it is, however, important to point out that many Jews take comfort in Israel as the place where we are not considered the “Other”.

One of the practices that sustains Jewish identity in Diaspora is the practice of concluding Jewish prayer services with two distinct prayers, one for Israel and the other for the current leader of the country in which we are living. This reflects, on the one hand, a sense of yearning for our place and people and on the other hand a sense of allegiance and belonging to wherever we find ourselves. Diaspora raises tensions in regard to identity. Jonathan Sacks refers to this as ‘Universalism vs particularism, either engaging with the world at the cost of Jewish identity, or holding fast to Jewish identity at the cost of disengaging from the world ‘<sup>4</sup> The practice of

<sup>1</sup> Babylonian Talmud Tractate Berachot, Chapter 6, Tosefta 6

<sup>2</sup> Translation provided – *Paths of Faith: the new Jewish Prayer book for synagogue and home* Chaim Stern, SPI Books, November 2002, p. 400

<sup>3</sup> Simon Rawidowicz & Benjamin C. I. Ravid, *Israel, the ever-dying people, and other essays* , Cranbury, NJ., Associated University Presses, Inc., note p.80.

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (2009), *Future Tense: a vision for Jews and Judaism in the global culture*. London Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, p. 117-118.

prayer seeks to address this tension.

Many Jewish practices and laws are designed to differentiate between when Jews are in the holy land and when living elsewhere, thus allowing Jews to live faithfully in Diaspora. Many of these are agricultural e.g. prohibitions on seventh year crop (Shmita) only refer to vegetables grown in Israel, and a prayer thanking G-D for rain is said even in parts of the world where it is arid. The Passover is seven days in Israel and eight when in the Diaspora. These practices have continued for centuries regardless of whether Israel was accessible to Jews.

Furthermore, when a Jewish community in a particular geographical setting is small there tends to be more interaction between the different elements of Judaism than in the context of large Jewish communities where there is opportunity for distinct expressions of Jewishness. Being the 'Other', a small minority, tends to create organic and inclusive Jewish communities as is the case in Belfast. This is made considerably easier as today it is possible to be part of a geographical Jewish community as well as having the option of belonging to online and/or international communities that suit particular spiritual needs.

Jewish tradition is rich with customs and laws that help to keep the community together and as a Jewish household is created by the actions and beliefs of the people who live in it a Jewish way of life is portable, you can take it with you anywhere you go.<sup>5</sup> However, it is these very same customs that can isolate and lead to the culture being misunderstood or in some cases feared and disliked. As Jonathan Sacks puts it:

Jews could not participate in society, because they kept to a code of law which set them apart in terms of what they ate, what days they kept holy, and so on. Judaism was a code of difference in an age when all citizens were supposed to be the same<sup>6</sup>

Two aspects of the Jewish faith that both help keep the sense of belonging in Diaspora and at the same time can create difference and 'Othering' are Shabbat and Kosher eating.

The significance of Shabbat can be illustrated by a quotation from a work by a distant relative of mine living in the town where my grandfather was born. Life for the Jewish community in Lithuania was hard before, during and immediately after WW2. Henry Tabakin writes:

After the close of World War II, we have become very familiar with the phrases of minority groups; minority rights, preservation of a small nation so that I deem it proper to describe how a minority lived in the midst of

<sup>5</sup> How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household, Blu Greenberg, Simon & Schuster Ltd, 01 December 1990, London .

<sup>6</sup> Future Tense, p.122

a majority; how a small group preserved its way of life. The Jew lived in Lithuania, which was a part of Russia in 1900. The Jew was a minority group who led a way of life that was designed to preserve its uniqueness, its individuality. One thing above anything else, that the Lithuanian Jew guarded jealously to preserve was the Sabbath.....<sup>7</sup>

The laws of Shabbat prohibit 39 forms of labour that were used when building the holy temple in Jerusalem<sup>8</sup> and include the prohibition on using any form of transport. This is one of the main reasons why Jews in Diaspora develop as communities living in close proximity to the synagogue. Observing Shabbat is not merely a matter of going to worship on a certain day but entails honouring the laws associated with Shabbat, either literally or symbolically.

Jewish practice falls into three distinct categories of law. There are laws that can be explained rationally (mishpatim), laws that are higher than our understanding (chukim) and laws that are 'testimonial' or commemorative (eidot). Kashrut (Kosher) laws fall into the category of Chukim meaning they simply need obeyed without the need to understand why they should be obeyed.

There are theories that these laws were a primitive form of promoting hygiene. Other theories suggest that kosher food preparation and prohibitions were directly in contrast to methods used in idol worship. Kosher eating, contrary to common belief, is more a list of foods that are permitted, thus excluding any food not mentioned. Keeping a kosher home requires access to kosher food (meat in particular) so Jews tend to shop in stores run by other Jews. Small Jewish communities, as in Northern Ireland, order food from Mainland Britain, and sometime Israel, to maintain a kosher diet. Religious Jews can only eat at the home of another Jew. All of this makes diet an important part of maintaining community (it is important to point out that there are no prohibitions in inviting guests from outside the faith to a kosher home)

Jonathan Sacks comments, 'Christianity and Islam trace their descent to Abraham, and their religious origins to G-D's covenant with him'<sup>9</sup> This creates the challenge of maintaining and defining our own identity while being open to hear how other faiths define us through their own frames of reference. However the process of affirming that we are Jews and not non-Christians or non-Muslims, can lead to a measure of 'self-othering', in the eyes of others. Judaism, unlike Christianity and Islam, is the only Abrahamic faith that is no longer missionary and is very much the smallest in number. It does however have very strong internal drive to maintain identity and prevent a falling away from the faith or straying from Jewish religious practice. One

<sup>7</sup> Henry Tabakin (1973), *Only Two Remained*. Cleveland: Private Edition, p.91-92

<sup>8</sup> For more information : Talmud Tractate Shabbat (Ch7, Mishna 2)

<sup>9</sup> Future Tense. p.72.

expression of that is Kiruv (or Closeness), an expression which refers to the practice of religious Jews reaching out to other Jews to encourage them to follow Jewish customs in the belief that this will hasten the arrival of the Mashiach (Messiah).

Jonathan Sacks has said 'The way a culture treats its Jews is the best indicator of its humanity or lack of it, not because Jews are special but because they are other'<sup>10</sup> However, in conclusion and as a consequence of the challenge to reflect on the question set by this project, I have been prompted to pose the question: Can 'being the other' be a source of strength and in itself a resource for maintaining and sustaining community?

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**Paula Tabakin**

Spring Conference Guests  
speaking many languages  
all of them english.

Broken air-con  
articulating the other  
finding brr..other

easter sunshine  
pretty stained glass panels  
lightless on pillows

almost easter:  
finding my own people  
othered from you and me



# A contribution to our thoughts of otherness by way of the golden rule

**Matt Scrimgeour**

In developing my contribution to our collected thoughts on 'being the other', I am informed by the rich network of relationships that are The Corrymeela Community. My intention is to develop some practical foresight in response to our shared task of answering the question "what does my text and/or tradition offer us when we find ourselves 'being the other?'" I attempt to do this by gazing through a lens coloured by three gospel actors: a Soldier whose servant is in distress; a Mother whose daughter is tormented and a Woman who loved more. My essay focuses primarily on the Synoptic texts, my reading of them and their reading of me.

In what follows I write from my limited perspective, as a man who has little personal experience to draw on when it comes to issues of marginalization, exclusion or 'othering'. However as a member of staff at Corrymeela Ballycastle, part of The Corrymeela Community,<sup>1</sup> I have over the last four years been baptized into this particular community's conversational encounters around the themes of sectarianism, other, difference, rivalry, desire, reconciliation and freedom. I approach my selected text informed by this frame of reference. I approach the task re-presented here armed with my imagination and insights exchanged by a variety of co-readers.

## **The Woman who loved more – Luke 7:36-50<sup>2</sup>**

This Lukan retelling recounts a visit made by Jesus to the house of a Pharisee named Simon. Most likely Jesus' reputation attracted the Woman and it's supposed that rather than gate crashing this gathering, such dinner parties, where rabbinic 'Teachers' were given a platform to share, would have been community events with an open fringe. Whilst attendance was not exclusive, a place at the table most definitely was.

What struck me as I reflected on the encounter was the paradox of vulnerability and boldness that inform the Woman's behaviour. Somehow she felt empowered to leave her accepted place, on the margins, to draw close to and intimately touch (washing with tears, kissing and anointing) the feet of Jesus, a 'Teacher' at the table. Simon had judged the Woman 'a sinner'<sup>3</sup> and his view was that were Jesus a

<sup>1</sup> The Corrymeela Community is both an organisation and a membership community; together we exist to Embrace Difference Heal Divisions Enable Reconciliation. More experiences of The Corrymeela Community are available when you visit, eat and or stay with us; other information about Corrymeela is available: [www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org); +4428 20761726 or [mattscrimgeour@corrymeela.org](mailto:mattscrimgeour@corrymeela.org)

<sup>2</sup> cf. Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8 (N.B. All quotations of holy scripture were taken from the New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>3</sup> Luke 7:39

prophet he too would know this.

I read here of a woman who defied the limitations placed upon her by those who had labelled her. Her response bypasses their judgement, however accurate, and is concentrated upon the man to whom Jesus says “she has shown great love”.<sup>4</sup> The washing of Jesus’ feet with her tears highlighted what Simon as host had not offered his guests<sup>5</sup> and also anticipates a time when Jesus would wash the feet of his followers encouraging them to do the same to *one an other*.<sup>6</sup>

Luke’s Jesus approved of the *kenotic* action of this other. In her loving deeds Jesus reads the desire to be forgiven and therefore he responds with the declaration “Your sins are forgiven...Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”<sup>7</sup> The person identified by the religious leaders as ‘a sinner’ received forgiveness, salvation and peace whilst weeping at the feet of Jesus.

My experience is that to love an other person, especially those beyond the circle to whom affection flows freely, is deeply challenging and demands a particular capacity within the one willing to incarnate love towards others.

One strand of wisdom in this narrative is that focussing on Jesus and meeting his needs is a key for those who find themselves in the role of other. My reading is that to worship like Mary<sup>8</sup> offers the worshipper new possibilities, irrespective of what is mediated by their circumstances.

If this Woman is to be read as a model for our labelled faith communities, in what ways might it be true that *worship* can be expected to be a re-configuring or capacity building experience for the worshippers, enabling us to live a shared future loving others in radical ways that have their source in the paradigm of Jesus?

### **The Mother whose daughter is tormented – Matthew 15:21-28<sup>9</sup>**

Jesus attempts to ignore this Mother, despite her vociferous “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.”<sup>10</sup> *Bothered* by the Mother’s abandoned ranting, the disciples ask Jesus to “send her away”.<sup>11</sup> Jesus disregards his disciples and belatedly acknowledges her maternal request for help, but his immediate response is not to go to the tormented girl; rather he takes the opportunity to engage this foreign woman about her negative ‘self-talk’ which Jesus

<sup>4</sup> Luke 7:47

<sup>5</sup> Luke 7:44

<sup>6</sup> cf. John 13

<sup>7</sup> Luke 7:48-50

<sup>8</sup> As John 12:1-8 identifies this Woman

<sup>9</sup> cf. Mark 7:24-30

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 15:22

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 15:23

read as being akin to a dog. The Mother is not apparently rejected by his direct enquiry or offended by the metaphor and she retorts “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Jesus commends the Mother for her ‘great faith!’ and ‘her daughter was healed instantly’ following Jesus’ “Let it be done for you as you wish.”<sup>12</sup>

The golden rule is not a concept reserved for critique and dissection by an exclusive few but rather such wisdom is designed to be worked on the anvil of community. Whilst our individual or shared ego might resist preferring an other, it is when we act on behalf of the other, whether enemy or friend, that we enter into mimesis with Jesus and anticipate the reality of his ‘*kingdom* come and his will be done’.<sup>13</sup>

As this Mother seeks mercy for her offspring she finds a road rising to meet her feet that leads through any fear that might have silenced her love fuelled petition for a messianic intervention. She repudiates rejection and refuses to be offended by the cutting brush off “woman you’re a dog!” Her *tenacious humility* attracts the attention of Jesus and it is her faith filled advocacy that secures her daughter’s merciful deliverance from demonic torment.

I read in this narrative a wisdom that nurtures awareness of the ways we conceive of and speak about ourselves and others. What we think, say and do are interdependent. As others we all have the opportunity to remain externally engaged or to internalize when we experience encounters with a different other. This Mother teaches us that openness, particularly to the Divine Other, however painful, can present us with new possibilities when we are the other. In crossing boundaries for an other, engaged as an advocate, the Mother is humanized, re-identified and grows in her experience and exercise of faith.

If this Mother is to be read as a model for faith communities that are advocating on behalf of others, what does this narrative indicate we might consider as we contemplate actions, that resonate with the doing to others as we would have them do to us, grounded and influenced by conversational encounters with the Wholly Other?

### **The Soldier whose servant is in distress – Matthew 8:5-13<sup>14</sup>**

This man approaches Jesus (or he sends a delegation from the local Synagogue as advocates)<sup>15</sup> on behalf of an other man, his paralysed and distressed servant. Luke’s account indicates that the soldier values the servant highly and Jesus apparently without question is responsive to the request for help, indicating that

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 15:27-28

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 6:10

<sup>14</sup> cf. Luke 7:1-10

<sup>15</sup> As in the Lukan account above

he will go to ‘cure’ the man who is ‘ill and close to death.’ The Centurion, a Roman soldier, clarifies his view that he is not worthy to have Jesus enter his house. He explains that he understands the dynamics of authority and therefore, as a man *surrendered* to Jesus’ authority, his more specific request is that Jesus ‘speak the word’, that the servant be mercifully delivered from death.

Once again this actor’s conversational, even if mediated, encounter with the divine Other is the tipping point of his receiving what was asked<sup>16</sup> for.

This foreign Soldier demonstrates faith that Jesus associates with the Patriarchs and the eschatological future that his kingdom kerygma anticipates. By doing to his servant as he would want others to do for him, the Centurion is in *mimesis* with Jesus. Consequently Jesus is amazed into prophesying that “many will come from the east and the west to eat with our fathers in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs will be thrown into the outer darkness”.<sup>17</sup>

The motivation that mercy is experienced by the servant resonates with Matthaen reframe of what it means to fulfil the law and the prophets; on two occasions<sup>18</sup> when Jesus is being questioned by Pharisees he anchors this paradigm shift in a citation<sup>19</sup> from the prophet Hosea “I desire mercy not sacrifice”.<sup>20</sup>

The wisdom here is that others in positions of power can choose to exercise their authority characterized by compassion, mercy, generosity and faith. It may be challenging for a camel to proceed through the needle gate but it is not impossible.<sup>21</sup> In fulfilling the law and the prophets the Jesus model reframes all things and makes possible a calibre of relationship where occupying soldiers financially resource the people of God.

If this gentile outsider is a model for our faith communities, what understandings of the other’s engagement with the authority of Jesus and the kingdom he announces does the narrative contain and what modes might the faith and desire for mercy expressed by the Centurion *anticipate* in our contexts?

Jesus teaches us that the way we engage with others identifies us as “children of our Father in heaven.”<sup>22</sup> Jesus is the model. Repeatedly Matthew’s Jesus indicates that it is relationships marked by love<sup>23</sup> that are most coherent with the reality of

<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere Jesus teaches ‘Ask, and it will be given to you’, he reveals a Father in heaven, Wholly Other, whose desire is to ‘give good things to those who ask him’ (Mt 7:7-11)!

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 8:11-12

<sup>18</sup> cf. Matthew 9:13 & 12:7

<sup>19</sup> Hosea 6:6

<sup>20</sup> cf. The NRSV translates mercy as love in Hosea 6:6

<sup>21</sup> cf. Matthew 19:24-26

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 5:45

<sup>23</sup> cf. Matthew 5:43-48; 10:37; 19:19; 22:37-40

the kingdom of heaven. It is the Wholly Other who anticipates that the above actors and our head, heart and hand movements might be informed by '*justice, mercy and faith*'<sup>24</sup> towards our family, friends, neighbours and particularly our enemies.<sup>25</sup>

The golden rule has universal reach. Literally it fills up the law and the prophets. It anticipates a calibre of relationships even with our enemies, that is enabled by friendship with the Wholly Other.<sup>26</sup>

The invitation to this quality of life has been articulated by Jesus and without distinction whether sister, brother, other or self, we are all invited to change our minds, move in an other direction and respond to the "*Follow Me*" invitation of Jesus, who makes known the *Wholly Other*.

### Conclusion<sup>27</sup>

*follow me* saith the sage  
come live in *mimesis* with me  
resist internal *egocentric* priority  
*incarnate* eternal mercy and grace

reset to my *kenarchic*<sup>28</sup> age  
love self *sister other brother* me  
seek first my *outside desire* polity  
gaze upon my *Wholly Other* face

*worship*  
*abandon*  
*surrender*  
*worship*

"*Other other other*  
the Lord God the Almighty  
who was and is and is to come"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 23:23

<sup>25</sup> cf. Matthew 5:43-48;

<sup>26</sup> cf. Matthew 17:20;19:26

<sup>27</sup> The original presentation was accompanied by this poetic arrangement using power point; the idea was that as I read through my essay and reached the italicised words above, a corresponding word would appear on screen. In conclusion the poem was fully assembled and read out to the audience c.f. the link for a sense of this! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr9J6zEOXB4>

<sup>28</sup> The *kenarchic* language is a play on the idea that order marked by kenotic characteristics would be mimicking the kingdom Jesus announced and anticipated c.f. <http://rogerhaydonmitchell.wordpress.com/2011/03/06/my-big-three-weeks/> for more on this.

<sup>29</sup> cf. Revelation 4:8 and Isaiah 6:3

# “Separate (!) but Equal (?)” - The Human Rights Frame for Marriage Equity

Andrew Hill<sup>1</sup>

The American writer and humorist Mark Twain once said: “Laws are sand, customs are rock.” In those six words he cut right to the heart of the relationship between our values and mores as a people, and the expression of those through our laws. If our *values* are the things that we believe to be important, have worth, and hold dear, and our *mores* are the traditional customs and folkways of a people that embody and express those values, then *laws* are lastly and simply the civic reflection of a peoples’ values and mores. Said another way, jurisprudence follows axiology, in that society creates, promulgates, enforces and changes its laws to bring them in line with its values and mores. This premise, so succinctly expressed by Mark Twain, is important to the following argument: *Because the Roman Catholic Church has helped inculcate the values of (1) caring for the weak and vulnerable, and (2) of equality for all based on our fundamental human dignity, they have helped build a human rights culture, and thus helped to create the necessary conditions in society for the creation and support of marriage equity laws in the United Kingdom.*

The Roman Catholic Church has a well-developed, and continuously developing, Social Teaching that is based upon the biblical exhortation to help the poorest and weakest among us. Scripture speaks of a special concern for the widow,<sup>1</sup> the orphan,<sup>2</sup> and alien<sup>3</sup> - often mentioning all three together<sup>4</sup> - as in Deuteronomy 10:18, “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.” These are classes of individuals who fall into a broader category of people of special concern called the “anawim.” This is a Hebrew word which means “the poor and lowly ones”<sup>5</sup> who are humble before the Lord.<sup>6</sup> They are “the meek” who shall inherit the earth according to both Psalm 37:11 and

<sup>1</sup> See Psalm 68:5, Exodus 22:22 and Proverbs 15:25.

<sup>2</sup> See Psalm 10:14, Exodus 22:22 and Proverbs 23:10.

<sup>3</sup> See Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:34 & 25:35 and Deuteronomy 31:12.

<sup>4</sup> See Deuteronomy 10:18, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Deuteronomy 24:17-18, Deuteronomy 26:12, and Deuteronomy 27:19.

<sup>5</sup> “There is a second term which we use to define those who pray in the Psalm: they are the anawim, “the poor and lowly ones” (Ps. 149:4). The expression turns up often in the Psalter. It indicates not just the oppressed, the miserable, the persecuted for justice, but also those who, with fidelity to the moral teaching of the Alliance with God, are marginalized by those who prefer to use violence, riches and power.”

John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, 23 May 2001. See: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/audiences/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_20010523\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010523_en.html)

<sup>6</sup> “It is a canticle that reveals in filigree the spirituality of the biblical anawim, that is, of those faithful who not only recognize themselves as “poor” in the detachment from all idolatry of riches and power, but also in the profound humility of a heart emptied of the temptation to pride and open to the bursting in of the divine saving grace.” Benedict XVI, General Audience, Wednesday, 15 February 2006. See:

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/audiences/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20060215\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060215_en.html)

Matthew 5:5. However, in Psalm 37, while the word “anawim” is interpreted most often as “the meek,” it is also alternatively translated as the lowly, the humble, the gentle and even as “the oppressed people.”<sup>7</sup> These are “The Other” among us, those who need our help and protection.

Today, who are among the “anawim,” the “oppressed people” among us and of special concern?

Today, what resources are available in the Roman Catholic tradition to support them?

The formal, historical Roman Catholic response to these questions has been through a series of specific papal and episcopal letters collectively known as Catholic Social Teaching (CST).<sup>8</sup> The tradition began by addressing the materially poor, with a special focus on the dignity of work and workers, in Pope Leo XIII’s nineteenth century encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (also known as “On the Condition of Workers”). From this beginning, CST has developed and expanded over 120 years, with letters and encyclicals addressing a growing range of social, economic and political concerns, but always with a focus on the fundamental dignity of the human person.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in a large system of interrelated values, we have two central values that the Roman Catholic Church has worked to inculcate into the fabric of society: (1) caring for the weak and vulnerable, and (2) equality for all based on our fundamental human dignity. These twin values reflect a particular sense of justice, both moral and legal, that has been shaped and imparted by the Roman Catholic Church, and has taken hold in western civilization. In fact, today a growing body of scholarship has advanced our understanding of the significant contribution of the early Christian Church to the refinement of the concepts of natural law, natural rights, human rights,<sup>10</sup> and their corresponding developments in early Western legal theory.<sup>11</sup> Without doubt, other factors have played a part in the influencing of this culturally determined notion of what is, and what is not just. However, because of its historically strong influence and unique position in society, the Church over time has been able to help mold the contours of what is believed to be good and bad, right and wrong, legal and illegal.

<sup>7</sup> In Psalm 37:11, the word is interpreted most often as “the meek,” but also as the lowly, the humble, the gentle and even as the oppressed people. See: (1) “The Meek”: New International Version (©1984); English Standard Version (©2001); King James Bible; American King James Version; American Standard Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; Darby Bible Translation; English Revised Version; Webster’s Bible Translation; (2) “The Lowly”: New Living Translation (©2007); (3) “The Humble”: New American Standard Bible (©1995); World English Bible; Young’s Literal Translation; (4) “The Gentle”: Bible in Basic English; and (5) “The Oppressed People”: GOD’S WORD® Translation (©1995).

<sup>8</sup> The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Veritas Publishing, Dublin, Ireland, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Rev. William J. Byron, S.J., “Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching,” *America: The National Catholic Weekly* (New York: America Press Inc., 31 Oct 1998). For an online copy of the article, see the following: <http://www.che.org/members/ethics/docs/617/Ten%20Building%20Blocks.doc>

<sup>10</sup> Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law 1150-1625* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> John Witte, *God’s Joust, God’s Justice: Law and Religion in Western Tradition* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006).

In western civilization in general, and in the United Kingdom in particular, there were major changes in terms of values and mores in the latter half of the twentieth century. Human rights became the *lingua franca* of the day, fueling vast political movements in civil rights, women's rights and gay rights. New, progressive legislation also prevented discrimination based on age and disability, and with these changes, the UK ushered in a new era of equal protection laws.<sup>12</sup> Those who would self-identify as "The Other" – oppressed minorities in our societies – found new protection and security in this emerging civil rights landscape.

These new values and legal changes also reached into the sphere of family and marriage law. In the first half of the last decade, from 2000 to 2005, support increased for the idea that LGB people should not be discriminated against, resulting in the passage of the Civil Partnership Act (CPA) in 2004.<sup>13</sup> The CPA established a separate but equal institution for same sex couples by creating "a new legal status, similar but not identical to marriage."<sup>14</sup> Beginning the next year, the Act gave same sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as those in a civil marriage, without actually allowing them to engage in civil marriage.<sup>15</sup>

However, in the last five years of the same decade an even more significant landmark in the development of equal rights in the UK emerged: the Equality Act of 2010. This legislation represents a paradigm shift in the legal rationale behind the law, shifting from a model of "anti-discrimination of protected classes" to a fundamental "human dignity" model. For example, the new Act establishes a single, comprehensive Equality and Human Rights Commission, which "replaces nine major earlier pieces of legislation covering gender, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age."<sup>16</sup> This is a dramatic leap forward for human rights theory and practice, because the underlying rationale for the legislation is not the law and politics of a single identity (i.e. race, sex, disability), but rather an understanding that discrimination is a violation of the dignity of a human being. This is a reflection of a fundamental shift in the values of the people throughout the United Kingdom, and its corresponding laws.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The underlying rationale for much of this progressive legislation was an "anti-discrimination" model, which appealed to a sense of equality and fair-play. This wave of legislation began with the Race Relations Act of 1965, but was extended as British society came to condemn legal discrimination beyond race to other categories such as sex (1975), disability (1995), religion (2003), and age (2006). In regard to discrimination based upon sexual orientation, new laws were passed in 2007, which also reflected the standard "anti-discrimination" model.

<sup>13</sup> The UK laws regulating marriage and family life changed significantly in the last decade, following changes in people's values and mores. For example, "there was an increase in the percentage of people who believed that LGB people should not be discriminated against between 2000 and 2004; [and] that same sex couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples." In fact, by 2004, "68 percent of the respondents believed that LGB people should not be discriminated against." - Neil Jarman, Research Update: Attitudes Towards Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in Northern Ireland, the Access, Research and Knowledge Project of the Economic & Social Research Council, No. 66, March 2010. See: [www.ark.ac.uk](http://www.ark.ac.uk).

<sup>14</sup> "The Civil Partnership Bill," Bill 132 of 2003-04, The House of Commons, 7 September 2004, page 3. See: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2004/rp04-064.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> "Gay weddings' first for Belfast," Story from BBC NEWS: Published: 2005/12/19 17:03:05 GMT, © BBC. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/4540226.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/northern_ireland/4540226.stm)

<sup>16</sup> Bob Hepple, *Equality: The New Legal Framework* (Hart Publishing, Portland, Oregon, 2011) page 1.

<sup>17</sup> Due to the transferred powers regarding equal opportunities and discrimination, the Equality Act of 2010 does not apply



Clearly, society's values and mores are slowly changing, and the laws are following. This is due in part to the many drivers behind those social changes, i.e. the combined social forces which are driving the ascending values of (1) caring for the weak and vulnerable, the "oppressed people," and (2) of equality for all based on our fundamental human dignity.

Among these drivers of social change is the Roman Catholic Church, which is a strong proponent of these values.

To be clear, the Roman Catholic Church is officially opposed to the concept of marriage equity. The Church has given its full-throated support to the defense of marriage, and its traditional definition as a union between one man and one woman. While it does not condemn homosexuals *per se*, it condemns homosexual relationships in both law and religion, and in this sense is a champion of traditional values. However, at the same time, the Roman Catholic Church is a champion of the human rights foundation upon which the entire marriage equity movement is based: the values of the care for the oppressed and the fundamental dignity of all human beings. The Church does not view this as a contradiction, but instead is perfectly able to hold simultaneously these values which others may see as opposing positions.

This is the dynamic at play with the Roman Catholic Church in the United Kingdom in regard to the marriage equity issue. The Church is both defending its long-held value of traditional marriage, and simultaneously, defending its long-held values of equality for all and help for the oppressed in society. It is in the latter that those who would self-identify as "The Other" would find a wellspring of current support and future hope in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

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**Patrick Kane**

**Crushing and cutting  
A Spring time of talking and sharing  
Paradigms shift**

to Northern Ireland, which continues with its own model of anti-discrimination legislation. However, the shift to a human rights model is also clearly evident in Northern Ireland, which is in the midst of developing a Bill of Rights for the first time. See: <http://www.nihrc.org/bor>

# 'Love your Enemies': Empathy as a Response to Oppression

Ebenezer Tadesse Segatu

## Introduction

I grew up in a communist country<sup>1</sup> where Christians were marginalised and oppressed. Until 1991 most of the churches were outlawed by the Marxist government. As Christians we faced widespread persecution, mass imprisonment and killings. Church meetings were held underground, and we were severely cautioned not to be caught by security agents. Christians were considered to be enemies of the socialist revolution and deserters of their national identity.<sup>2</sup> We were made the 'other'. Such experience shaped our perception of the world around us. Our world was divided between 'them' and 'us'. They were the enemies of the gospel and the people of God and we were the victims. As victims we were waiting until the Lord punished them for what they did to us.

The otherness imposed upon Christians by the oppressors defined the identity and the relationship we had with the wider world. We became inward looking, self-contained and a united community. We totally distanced ourselves from the hostile world around us. Fear overtook love. We became the militant other, with only enemies in this world. Even after the fall of the communist government the 'them' and 'us' categories remained. All who oppose the gospel and do not conform to the ethical standards of the church are considered to be outsiders and enemies. The religious freedom the country enjoys today cannot erase the otherness of the Christian community.

The indifference or even the antipathy that was developed through the previous years of oppression and marginalisation became a great obstacle in relating to the world around us. Lack of empathy crippled the church, diminishing its social significance. Otherness if not guarded by empathy might lead to enmity. In this essay I will demonstrate that empathy towards our 'enemies', as expressed in the New Testament, is a valuable disposition Christians need to have when marginalised or oppressed or subjected to be the 'other'.

## Empathy Defined

The word empathy was first coined by a German philosopher, Robert Vischer (1847-1933) in the mid-nineteenth century in order to explain the psychological theory of art (Calloway-Thomas 2010, p. 7). Since then it has been an area of interest to psychologists and philosophers. Empathy as defined by Martin Hoffman (2000, p. 30) is, 'the involvement of psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with another's situation than with his own situation.' On the

<sup>1</sup> Between 1974-1991 Ethiopia was a communist country under a Marxist-Leninist military junta.

<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth account of the persecution of Christians in Ethiopia see Oyvind M. Eide (2000) *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. Oxford: James Currey.

other hand Lou Agosta (2010, p. 12) from the context of philosophy, defines empathy as, 'a form of receptivity that provides input to further processing which results in (empathetic) knowledge of another individual.' He states that empathy is 'precisely that which provides the other and the individual in community as an essential aspect of its functioning.' Furthermore, he emphasises that, 'the one can only intend the humanness of the other in empathy if he has his own humanness from the other' (Agosta 2010, p. 10). Even though the study of empathy is still in development, it has a significant role in areas like conflict resolution and psychological healing.

### **Empathy in the New Testament**

The New Testament does not use the word empathy; however, it is not difficult to trace the concept in the life and teachings of Jesus. The incarnation is a major New Testament event that discloses God's empathy. The birth of Jesus heralds God becoming human in order to empathise with humanity. The incarnation sets a pattern of relationship that humans need to adopt. As Miroslav Volf (1996, p. 100) states, 'God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other.' In the teachings of Jesus empathy is also expressed as a prominent mode of relationship. Jesus' idea of empathy extends from 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt. 22:39) to 'love your enemies' (Mt. 5:44). He summons his followers not only to care for the needy but also to 'pray for those who persecute' them. It is a call to empathise with their enemies as a response to what they face from them.

This basic concept is expressed in a number of parables and in the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples. The principle of forgiving those who sin against us is rooted in, according to Erick Erickson (1981, p. 352), 'a promised complementarity of forgiving and being forgiven'. A complementarity of experience is essential to relate to our enemies empathically. Geoff Goodman (1991, p. 202) notes, 'an empathetic response, prompted by what we know to be true of ourselves, relieves suffering often caused by vindictive threats and negative attitudes.'

'The Parable of the Good Samaritan' in Lk. 10: 25-37 is a very good example of an empathetic response. As an answer to the question "who is my neighbour?", Jesus tells a story of a Samaritan, a religious and cultural outcast, who empathises with an injured Jew and acts as a neighbour, unlike the two righteous Jews who passed the victim. It is noted that there was enmity between the two, but the Good Samaritan was able to cross that historical barrier and empathise with the enemy. Thus Jesus is calling his listeners to be neighbours to their enemies. As Goodman (1991, p. 202) observes, 'there is a universal oneness in perspective among all human beings, allowing all of us to empathize with one another based on our ability to empathise with ourselves.'

The concept of empathy is also expressed in Paul's letters. Paul in Gal. 3: 28 writes: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. Paul affirms the 'universal oneness' of humanity despite ethnic or cultural

differences. As Goodman (1991, p. 203) correctly points out, the implication of Paul's message is that 'humankind has the collective capacity to interact as an empathic whole.' The first century Christian community flourished in a hostile world, being grounded on the concept of empathy. The violent opposition and marginalization they faced from the world did not make them a self-obsessed militant religious group; rather they became a symbol of love and reconciliation.

### Christian Disciplines for Empathy

Luke Bretherton (2006, p.113) in his book *Hospitality as Holiness* notes that, 'Christians cannot stand outside their environment, or against others, but must participate in the wider culture and the enterprises of their neighbours as those transfigured.' Thus, empathy is a fundamental mind-set Christians need to develop when they are oppressed or marginalised as the other. This essay identifies three main Christian disciplines, adopted from the works of three Christian theologians, that Christians need to develop in order to relate with the world in empathy. The first one is forgiveness. The prayer Jesus uttered on the cross, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing' (Lk. 23:34), sets a clear pattern for Christians when they face such violent opposition. The temptation is to dehumanise the enemy and seek revenge or retributive justice; however in forgiveness one would be able to move from a such disposition by empathising with the enemy. As Volf (1996, P. 125) correctly puts it, 'in a world of irreversible deeds and partisan judgments redemption from the passive suffering of victimization cannot happen without the active suffering of forgiveness.'

The second discipline that helps us to develop empathy is 'sensing needs'. Susan Holman (2009, p. 15) defines sensing needs as 'the initial process in any rhetoric about physical and social needs that happens at the level of creating or awakening personal perception.' Sensing the need of the other or even the enemy enables us to see and feel the humanness of our opposition thus, helping us to empathise with them. The third discipline that we need to adopt in order to develop empathy is hospitality. Bretherton (2006, p. 128) notes that 'the motif of hospitality is a root metaphor and practice embedded in the Christian tradition that encapsulates its crucial elements with regard to how the church relates to its neighbour.' Without assimilating into the wider world or withdrawing from it, the church needs to host the life of its neighbour. Bretherton (2006, p. 128) states that hospitality 'allows for Christians to retain their specific criteria to evaluating the veracity of moral claims, while at the level of moral practice experiencing both continuity and discontinuity with their neighbours.' Empathy embodies such an idea of hospitality.

### Conclusion

Today our world is becoming hostile to Christians. The church in Ireland might not face an organised form of persecution; however, there is some kind of othering Christian communities face because of the secularisation of public policies. It is obvious that there is a clear distinction between Christian values and those of the secular world which characterises today's Ireland. Nonetheless, an emphasis on the distinction of the church

from the world might lead to antipathy, as happened in Ethiopia. The church needs to relate with this world without losing its distinctiveness. If the church cannot empathise with the world, either it becomes a gathering of fundamentalists who constantly clash with the world, or segregationists who are totally disconnected from the world.

As argued so far, empathy is a biblical concept of relating with the other, specifically when the faith community is oppressed or marginalised. Today the church in Ireland needs to empathise not only with its neighbours but also with its enemies. This can be achieved when we are able to forgive those who sin against us. It can grow when we sense the need of the world around us. And it bears fruit when we extend our hospitality to others despite our differences.

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# The 'Other' in Psychology and Theology

Eammon Walls

## Part 1: The 'Other' in Psychology

Psychologists have developed a number of theories about the 'other'. Much of the empirical work has focused on conflict situations and issues like racism, discrimination and ethnic differences. What follows is a very brief sketch of some of the theories that have been proposed. One of the issues that all of these theories try to address is the way in which we understand processes of 'othering' at the level of the individual and at the level of the group, and the ways in which individuals and groups are related to each other. This is an important methodological issue for psychology in general. This is also an important issue from a theological perspective.

### Some theories of the 'Other' in Psychology

*Displaced Aggression Hypothesis* (e.g. Dollard et al 1939)

On these models, aggression is understood as being a response to some frustrated goal. This aggression is directed at a subordinate other – even if the subordinate has no role in the original frustration of the goal. In this tradition, 'subordinate' is defined as being an other who is not capable of retaliating. It is because of the subordinate's inability to retaliate that aggression is directed, or displaced, against them.

*Authoritarian Personality Theory* (e.g. Adorno et al 1950)

There may be statistical evidence that certain kinds of personalities are more likely to hold certain views, such as conservative socio-economic and political views. A certain kind of 'authoritarian personality' may be more likely to hold views of a xenophobic, racist, or ethnocentric nature. There is empirical evidence that people who are prejudiced against one minority are more likely to also be prejudiced against other minorities.

*Uncertainty, Anxiety, Dissonance Models* (e.g. Wilson 1973)

On these models, fear of uncertainty and the desire to resolve it is a central psychological motivation. In this tradition, psychologists want to ask whether certain kinds of cognitive predispositions might make a person more likely to act in a certain way (e.g. discriminate). One such predisposition might be the desire to resolve uncertainty, anxiety or a psychological dissonance. One version of this view is called Cognitive Dissonance Theory.

*Stereotyping* (e.g. Depret & Fiske 1993)

Stereotypes are to be seen as the result of basic and normal information processing

in the brain. People learn stereotypes because of a predisposition to perceive associations among events or to use patterns to understand behaviours or other environmental variations. Stereotypes of any kind can be self-perpetuating. By 'self-perpetuating' we mean that a stereotype of a group may be 'made true' by the consequent behaviours of the stereotyped group.

### Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986) states that group stability is related to group identity. The more stable group boundaries are, the more likely that groups will discriminate against each other. SIT views social identity as the primary motivator of intergroup discrimination. There is a large body of evidence that members of a subordinate group will often discriminate *against* their own group and in favour of the dominant group. One of the most famous studies done in this area is the Clarke & Clarke (1947) doll study in which African-American children showed a distinct preference for White dolls over Black dolls.

Tajfel et al devised a study in which participants were told that they belonged to one of two groups that they had never heard of before. The groups had no history of interaction, didn't know anything about each other, and were not locked in a zero-sum structure. Some people within the groups were then given the role of 'Allocator'. In the allocation task, there was a significant statistical tendency to allocate more points to the ingroup than the outgroup, even when *both* groups ended up worse off as a result. The allocators in Tajfel's study preferred to discriminate *even when* this meant increased costs for the discriminator.

### Social Dominance Theory (SDT)

Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto 1999) begins with the basic observation that all human societies tend to be based on group-level social hierarchies (there may be individual-level hierarchies as well). SDT focuses on the way that group identities and group behaviours may contribute to, and may be affected by, group-based hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, 38). Group-based hierarchies can be created and maintained in a number of ways, including by a phenomenon known as 'behavioural asymmetry'.

Behavioural asymmetry is the idea that sometimes, under certain conditions, oppression may become a cooperative game. SDT puts an emphasis on the manner in which subordinate groups actively participate in and contribute to their own subordination. One way in which subordinate groups may contribute to their own subordination is by showing higher levels of self-destructive behaviours than dominants do. Examples include disproportionately high levels of crime, drug abuse and alcoholism in Black communities in the US compared to Whites. It should be noted that behavioural asymmetry does not always happen. In other historical cases,

such as in the Troubles in Northern Ireland, it is not clear whether or not behavioural asymmetry actually occurred.

## Part 2: The ‘Other’ in Theology

A number of theories have been proposed in psychology to help us to understand the nature of ‘the other’ in terms of group-level identifies and conflicts. A number of these theories have great power to explain things like discrimination, racism, and prejudice, and hopefully they may go some way to helping us to solve these problems. However, there are a number of methodological issues in psychology concerning the ways in which we describe the ‘other’, particularly the ways in which we describe individuals and groups. Psychologists are limited by the empirical methods of science, and so they have to make a number of simplifying *ceteris paribus*-type assumptions. For example, many psychologists will talk about this group or that group, a ‘dominant group’ or a ‘subordinate group’, as if these were definite, coherent units in the world. But are these terms really meaningful?

### A Theological Perspective of the ‘Other’ in the Irish Situation

When psychologists are examining ethnic conflicts, they will often make the simplifying assumption that there really is such a thing as a social group, and that these groups are clearly defined in some way. But is that right? Is it really meaningful to call one group ‘Catholics’ and another group ‘Protestants’? Perhaps it is not so clear. We may want to ask to what extent or in what ways it is appropriate for us to use group-level theological labels in describing the Irish situation. In theology, we need to be very careful when we use a label to describe a group, and we need to be very careful when we describe any single group as ‘the other’.

From a theological perspective, we should be much less concerned about which religious groups were fighting which in Ireland, and much more concerned about why the Churches did so little to stop the fighting in the first place. According to Martin Dillon, ‘Church leaders and politicians have been vocal in their condemnation of violence, but they have not sufficiently demonstrated the true nature of reconciliation...Nowhere else in Europe has there been so much friction between the Churches, such a lack of commitment to the basic Christian principle of “love thy neighbour”, and such callous disrespect for human life’ (Dillon 1997, p.2-3).

The image of the Churches has changed in Ireland. And with it, the image of theology has changed. In universities, theologians are increasingly becoming the ‘other’: theology is rarely considered to have any credibility as an academic subject. The *reason* that theologians are the other is that they have consistently shouted down their intellectual opponents by the use (and abuse) of their faith-texts and traditions. So here I am, talking about theology, and here I am, being the other. It is time for me, when I am doing theology, to *stop* using my faith-texts and traditions, and to start listening to other people’s faith-texts and traditions instead. This raises



some profound issues for times when I am the other. Our thematic question at this conference was, 'what resources are available within my faith's texts and traditions for when I am the other?' My worry is, is it possible, or permissible, for me to draw on any resources from my faith's texts and traditions when I am the other?

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ewalls03@qub.ac.uk

Cognitive Science, Queen's University Belfast

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# 'No longer at Ease': the call to uncomfortable relationships and loving the Other

Maithrie White

*We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.*

In T. S. Eliot's evocative '*Journey of the Magi*' (1980: 97), the Magi returning after their journey searching for the Christ, find themselves 'no longer at ease'; in their 'old dispensation', finding their own people to be alien, they comprehend that they are now 'Other'. The poem encapsulates something fundamental to the Christian faith – that *we* are called to be 'no longer at ease... in the old dispensation'. I will pick up this phrase and ask what we can discover about relating to the 'Other' as demonstrated in the life, teachings and death of Christ. In exploring two aspects of human negotiation with the Other – ethnic and religious (denominational) Other – I will focus on my experiences as a Westernised Asian female in Sri Lanka, my country of origin, and in the UK, both ironically places where I am viewed as 'Other', and will raise a question which has preoccupied me here in Northern Ireland – who is my neighbour, the Other, that Christ calls us to 'love'?

The Christian narrative is grounded on a positive, restorative and celebratory relationship to the Other. When asked what the greatest commandment was, Christ replies "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... the first and greatest commandment", adding "...the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22: 37-40).<sup>1</sup> Both these are pivotal to the law and prophets. It is hardly surprising that Christ summarises the greatest commandments in this way for it encapsulates what is fundamental to our humanity and our bearing of God's image: that we only comprehend Self in the context of Other and are primarily creatures that find meaning only in relationships of love with the Other. We are commanded to love the Divine Infinite Other with every fibre of our being and to love the human Other (which we encounter through life) as ourselves. It is only in so doing that we understand who we are. Embedded in these commandments is the fact that we need to love ourselves – the Other within ourselves. As T.S. Eliot puts it, we often 'prepare a face to meet the faces that we meet' (18).<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid a Jekyll and Hyde existence we need to engage with ourselves – the Other within us that we do not like or whose existence we may not admit to, that Other the public never sees.

<sup>1</sup> All Biblical references are from the New International Version of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> An extreme instance of the Othering of Self is seen in Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (2007) in which a man divides himself into two, creating a separate person, so that he can explore his evil 'Other self'.

The commandments are a foundation from which humans can reach out in relationship, allowing human nature and society to reach its full potential.

From a theological perspective, the Other is of supreme importance. This is a thought that sits uncomfortably in a consumerist and Self-centred age. Thus encountering the Other often generates suspicion, not relationship, and far less love. While Otherness is the basis of Self definition and necessary for our humanity, Otherness can lead to Othering, where a positive identity of oneself or one's social group is secured by stigmatising or denigrating the Other. The concept of Othering was given currency by Said (1978) who points out that the 'Occident' defines it/Self against the 'Orient', which contains 'the deepest and most recurring images of the Other' (p.87). Highlighting the assumed inferiority of Other endorses the supposed superiority of Self. It dehumanizes or demonizes groups, which further justifies 'civilisation' or exploitation of these 'inferior' others, even intervention in nation states' regime changes. Othering is alive and well in our world producing marginalization by ethnicity, race, geography, or religion. While British TV documentaries and Charity advertisements sometimes dehumanize the non-Western Other by presenting images of emaciated children, extreme poverty, filth, or violence, reinforcing the narrative of 'advanced developed Self' against 'savage or undeveloped Other', the portrayal of the Islamic world is not far from demonization. Centuries of racial and ethnic 'Othering' have left the world a broken and deeply wounded place.

Multicultural contemporary society, however, is aware of Othering. Science Fiction and Fantasy films are now preoccupied with exploring the extreme Other. Strange creatures – werewolves, vampires, humans of strange powers and aliens – inhabit *Dr Who*, *Heroes*, *Being Human*, and *True Blood*, exploring how we relate to those vastly different to ourselves. The Time Lord evinces a God-like nature in his constant efforts to preserve the 'Other', grieving over the loss of alien life-forms and valuing every species, however strange or dangerous, and encouraging races in the Universe to do the same.

In a more personal context, what does it mean to be perceived as Other? Being a racial hybrid, for most of my life I lived with cultural 'unease' within the culture I grew up in. Bhabha (1994) introduces hybridity as a 'third space of enunciation', an in-between contradictory space – neither colonised nor coloniser – of ambivalent identity. Hybridity can be discomfiting as one is always outsider, racially Other, and in a state of dislocation. As the child of parents of colonised Sri Lanka, I *was* the 'Other'. My mother, a Tamil, grew up with a colonial British education. English being her first language, she had little knowledge of Tamil. My father was Eurasian (British-Asian) with a British upbringing (marmalade, toast and boiled eggs for breakfast being the norm!). My taste in music and art was Western. My childhood imagination was inhabited by Winnie-the-Pooh, Mary Poppins, Narnia, Peter Pan, and Enid Blyton stories, and a degree in English Literature infused me further with British culture.

Unfortunately, in a postcolonial era, a Westernised English-speaking native in Sri Lanka is 'Other'. In postcolonial Sri Lankans, English generates mixed feelings: desired (for commerce and employment), yet despised as the coloniser's language. Yasmine Gooneratne, a Sri Lankan poet, captures this dilemma in *'This Language, This Woman: A lover's reply'*:

...Do not call her slut and alien,  
names born of envy and your own misuse  
that whisper how desire in secret runs. (Gooneratne:  
1971)

Westernised English speaking Sri Lankans are perceived as the traitorous Other, an attitude causing a generation of English-speaking Sri Lankans of Dutch, Portuguese and British descent, including my father's family, to migrate. Further alienation was generated when our home was attacked during ethnic riots, and I realised that the Sinhalese identified my family as Tamil – something I had never felt myself to be – and therefore, the 'Other'. Ironically as I had no affinity to the Tamil culture, Tamils also considered me Other. After briefly attempting to integrate myself I walked away from the possibility of assimilation. On the outside of a culture whose space did not accommodate me, I found Hybridity to be a joyous thing. It is liberating to be 'neither this nor that', to occupy a space that is fluid.

Arriving for studies in the UK, I encountered the familiar landscape of my mind, one I had explored as a child through stories and been taught to love. In the UK, engagement in the local church and relationships within the University context were exhilarating. Nevertheless, the old colonial mindset was alive. Bhabha (1994) suggests that in a multicultural context, a colonial mindset still encounters the Other through a form of control by making it exotic or turning it into something esoteric. Instead of assimilation, there is what Khalida Khan calls the 'steel bands and sarees approach':

...missionaries' slides, the invitation to the steel band,  
the outsider's view of carnival, the genteel tasting  
of strange foods, the brightness or quaintness of  
traditional dress (Griffiths, 2005: p.5).

Some of my encounters with Christian leadership in the UK demonstrated that a Christian colonialist mindset resulted in stereotyping of me as Asian female Other. In a predominantly white male Christian leadership environment my presence in a leadership context – as female and Asian – was discomfiting to some.<sup>3</sup>

So now here I am, an Asian female Protestant in Northern Ireland. Years of conflict have left stark suspicions in Northern Ireland in terms of relating to the Other. While in Sri Lanka,

<sup>3</sup> At these instances their discomfort was droll: the double-bind was difficult. I was Asian (you are outside the framework of "we should be missionarying you" context) and female (you are outside "minding –the-crèche-and-making-tea arena)."

Catholics and Protestants are not pitted against each other, but allies in an antagonistic Buddhist society, here there is deep antagonism between the two. I often ask myself 'how can two groups, having access to the tools for relationship to the Other – forgiveness, acceptance, restoration – be so fractured and alienated?' The issues are complex, I know this. Yet Christ's very nature and His response to the Other of His time are electrifying, providing radical alternatives to prejudiced Othering. In Christ's Incarnation, God became Other, moving from a place of power to the powerlessness of servant. In a nation where Gentiles, slaves and women were the inferior Other, the words and actions of Christ were dynamite, and fractured the concrete boundaries with the Other.

In the context of the two Greatest Commandments, when asked who the 'neighbour' they should love was, Christ describes the most unlikely person – a Samaritan – acting as one. The Samaritan was to the Jew what the Catholic Republican or Protestant Unionist might be to each other. While some of Christ's closest friends were women, he violated convention further by talking with a *Samaritan woman* of dubious reputation and His first resurrection appearance was to a woman. In the Centurion's appeal to Jesus for the healing of his slave we see not just Christ's response, but the confident expectation of a *Gentile occupier* pleading with a Jew to intervene. Christ's response goes beyond what was requested: he offers to go to the house of a Gentile to heal the slave, an offer that the Gentile centurion declines, perhaps understanding what that would mean for a Jew.

Christ calls us to be 'no longer at ease', to go beyond the easy relationships we choose with those least Other, and most akin to ourselves. He not only became 'Other', but during His lifetime He overturned the prejudiced responses of His society to the pre-dominant 'Others' in their time. This is precisely the theological starting point we are called to have in our society and time.

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# Being the Other: A Lesson From Early Christianity

Barry Trainor

In this short paper my intention is to draw upon the historical experience of the early Christians and apply this to our contemporary situation. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that being the 'other' is not necessarily a place of oppression, but rather one of opportunity for influence and change. I shall be speaking from a Christian perspective; nonetheless, I believe my contention is applicable to all people of faith.

For Christians, the sense of 'other' is experienced frequently in modern everyday living. The astounding advances in medicine, science, engineering, technology etc. during the twentieth century have lured humankind into a false sense of arrogant security whereby postmodernist society views a belief in God to be primitive and outdated. Roger Schutz wrote, almost fifty years ago, in 1962, 'The real danger of the new civilization is a spiritual one and is the result of the unparalleled advance of scientific instruction.' He goes on, 'In the East as in the West God is dead for technological man.'<sup>1</sup> Faith in God is under continual attack from an aggressive and unrelenting secularism whose main goal is the promotion of its own 'religion', i.e. the denial of God's existence, the acquisition of material things and an indifference to all religions. The guiding principles of moral absolute right or wrong have been replaced by the relativism of post-modern culture, whereby judgements are a matter of personal opinion. The pressure to acquiesce to the prevailing forces is at times intolerable - akin to that which the early Christians of the first three centuries faced when confronted by the pagan society in the great Mediterranean cities of the Roman Empire. The response to these current threats by Christianity and the other great monotheist religions is at best muted.

Mostly, the early Christians were a secretive cult and did not evangelize in public. Their message was one of peace and poverty. Although their furtiveness and stubborn disconnection from society caused great offence to the authorities, the Roman Empire was tolerant of the gods of the lands they conquered and the Christian sect was allowed to flourish, largely unimpeded, until 250ce. Persecutions prior to that were local and even Origen, that great defender of the faith, conceded that the number of martyrs was 'easily numbered.'<sup>2</sup> The leaders of the Church were careful to follow Paul's instructions when he counselled obedience to the civil authorities (Rom. 13: 1-7)<sup>3</sup>.

The Christian cult was only one of many in a polytheistic society. The Pantheon accepted the gods of their conquered countries, but Christianity was different. It had only one God and the Church refused to worship the false Roman gods or the god Emperor. The

<sup>1</sup> Roger Schutz (Prior of Taizé), (1962), *Unity. Man's Tomorrow*, London: The Faith Press, p57-58.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Lane Fox (1988), *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*. London: Penguin Group, pp.423-424.

<sup>3</sup> *The New Jerusalem Bible* (1985), London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd. Used for all biblical quotations.

Christians denied their God a place in the Pantheon and they refused to join with their pagan neighbours in offering sacrifices to the numerous gods for good harvests, victory in war, guarantees of public order etc. Thus these refusals came to be viewed as acts of political as well as religious defiance. Christianity is at odds with everything Rome stands for and the prospect of confrontation is not a question of 'if' but 'when'. Systematic persecutions commenced in 250ce, culminating in the savage 'Great Persecution' under Diocletian (284-305ce). It was not until the Edict of Milan (313ce) when Constantine adopted Christianity as the religion of the Empire that the pagan persecutions halted. Throughout this epoch early Christians were the 'other' in the Roman Empire just as they are now in postmodern European culture. The majority of Christians refused to apostatise and it is in their heroic resistance that we seek contemporary inspiration.

One famous martyr, Ignatius of Antioch, who was probably a disciple of the Apostle John, was arrested in Syria by the Roman authorities and sent to Rome for trial. On his journey he wrote a number of letters to the churches in the regions through which he passed, in which he always stresses the importance he places on retaining the faith in the face of tribulation. He demonstrated his great willingness to suffer and die for his faith. Eusebius summarises from Ignatius's letter to the church at Rome, '... in his letter he implores them not to beg him off from his martyrdom and so rob him of his longed-for hope.'<sup>4</sup> Ignatius's steadfastness is replicated by his contemporary Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, when he spoke to his oppressor, 'Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'<sup>5</sup>

We know of many other important figures who were martyred, but many more unknown thousands followed the example set by their leaders and suffered and died for their faith rather than submit to false gods. However it is not the fact that these Christians endured martyrdom (though their sacrifice is indeed inspirational) which is pertinent to contemporary society; we need to examine their reasons for so doing. Why did so few choose apostasy? After all, the pagan gods they or their immediate ancestors had so recently worshipped had served Rome well for a millennium. The answer, I believe, lies in the virtue of hope. When the bearers of the faith arrived in the Roman cities they initially attracted women, the poor, the slaves, the marginalised - the 'other'. They met in small groups, often in houses, the only place where women had authority, and there they prayed and broke bread in memory of Christ. From these small groups, a network developed and from these, evangelizing groups. To the urban poor the new religion was seductive and simple, promising the prospect of a happier place where they would be equal in the sight of God. Jesus's message about the righteous being saved (Mt. 13: 43) and the unrighteous being cast

<sup>4</sup> G.A. Williamson (Trans.), Andrew Louth (Rev. and edited), (1989) *Eusebius*. London: Penguin Books, p98.

<sup>5</sup> Ciarán O'Carroll (2009), *Theology for Today, Church History* (Volume One, Series Nine.) Dublin: The Priory Institute, p19.

into a furnace (Mt. 13: 41-42), resonated with the dispossessed and represented a challenge to the ruling elite. Crucially, the pagan religions did not offer an afterlife, one which offered hope in a world of hopelessness. The reason why the Christians did not fear martyrdom was their hope and belief in the resurrection of the dead.

These new communities did more than just believe - they lived their faith. They helped each other in times of crisis. The sick were tended to, the hungry given food, the homeless given clothing and shelter and the unemployed were given work. This social aspect was particularly appealing to the disadvantaged as it demonstrated a 'living out' of their faith. It was not just a private belief system; it was a way of living, in which 'service' was the driving force. The second century theologian, Irenaeus, said, 'The glory of God is a person fully alive', a view many would struggle to see in Christianity today. More often than not, Christians today are viewed as restrained, uptight, repressed and prone to shaking our collective heads in disapproval.<sup>6</sup> In defence of our Christian faith, why are so many afraid or embarrassed to engage in 'God-talk' in public life? Maybe we have become the 'other' through neglect and apathy.

Our 'otherness' is exemplified in the way we acquiesce in society's treatment of the poor. The inner cities of Europe, even here in Ireland, are inhabited by people, the majority of whom are often unemployed, poor, and susceptible to criminal influences. They are without hope. They live in a forgotten world left to their own devices. They are marginalised and much maligned by governments, press and society and in their poverty they are voiceless. These people too are the flock of the Shepherd, yet the community of Christ remains mostly silent about a system that fundamentally ignores them. They are the victims of rampant secularism, an extreme capitalism which at its root believes in the survival of the fittest and only minimum help for the disadvantaged. Would our early Christian ancestors leave these people without hope?

In Europe, Christianity has become the 'other'. Encroachments from various sources, ranging from the aggressive atheism represented by people like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, to the woolly-minded thinking of the exponents of spiritual and theological neutrality who proclaim that faith values are matters for the individual and should not be embedded in the fabric of society, have resulted in a neo-pagan culture which demeans and even denies the transcendent.

Nevertheless, there is a growing clamour for spirituality as is evidenced in the rise in popularity of books and cults dealing with such matters, but people are seeking it in a vacuum. In the Catholic tradition, the Vatican II documents, *Unitatis Redintegratio*

<sup>6</sup> Philip Yancey (2001), *Soul Survivor. How My Faith Survived The Church*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, p9.



and *Nostra Aetate*,<sup>7</sup> propose a means by which people of faith can unite in their commonality and fill this vacuum with the message of hope. In the Christian tradition, we must focus on this message of hope and of resurrection, in which we will rediscover our tremendous capacity to influence and change society. With the early Christians as our example, we, as the 'other' in modern society, can confront the challenges with courage and simple faith. As Irenaeus exhorts, we must become fully alive.

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### Paula Tabakin

Irish Dew  
Always one  
Sometimes the other

Warm heart  
Context and reference  
Many words

African rain  
Love and fear  
Where are you

Heavy Hamsin  
Jerusalem heart  
Soon to break

Behold, how good and how  
pleasant it is for brothers  
to dwell in unity. (Psalms 133:1)

<sup>7</sup> Austin Flannery, O.P. (1977), *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, pp452-560; 738-749.

# Scratch a Russian and he bleeds Orthodoxy

Trevor Warner<sup>1</sup>

The position of evangelical Christians in Russia, since they first emerged in the 1860s,<sup>2</sup> has always been one of the 'other'. The Orthodox<sup>3</sup> authorities, under the Tsar, quickly tried to suppress the new evangelical movement by State means, including arresting and deporting pastors to Siberia. The basic State ideology was one of Orthodoxy and any Russian who was not Orthodox was suspect; in fact it was illegal, until 1905, for an Orthodox believer to convert to another religion.<sup>4</sup> Berdyaev sums up this idea well when he says, "*the profession of some orthodox faith*" was "*always the criterion by which membership of the Russian people is judged*" (Dunn, 1977, p.10). This is echoed in the Russian proverb - '*scratch a Russian and he bleeds Orthodoxy*'. In 1924 Mikhail Kalinin, President of the USSR, acknowledged the history of the new evangelical movements under the Tsars when he said, '*It would be ridiculous... if the Party did not take into account that the history of the sectarians is a history of uninterrupted persecution*' (Sawatsky, 1981, p.29). Despite this recognition Communism soon took religious persecution much further by declaring anyone of religious faith, and by default against the Revolution and Communism, '*an Enemy of the People*'.

Evangelicals had to forge their faith under the huge tension of being an ethnic Russian, but at the same time the cultural accusation of being a traitor to their people, for not being firstly Orthodox, or later Communist. This 'mantle' of living as the other has had both positive and negative effects on evangelical faith in Russia; it has also brought up the question of identity.

## What sources did the Russian evangelical church draw on in these circumstances?

### Biblical Material

There are a number of notable areas in the Bible which evangelicals in Russia draw on, from the story of the Exile, to the story of the struggles of the New Testament Church. The idea of the Elect is rejected in terms of Calvinism in most Russian Evangelical circles. However in their context of being the other, they hold onto the idea of the Elect in terms of God being on their side. Further, New Testament

<sup>1</sup> The Author worked with Operation Mobilisation for 10 years in the Russian Federation and partnered with Russian evangelical churches during that time.

<sup>2</sup> The Reformation never touched Muscovy as it was a Reformation of the Medieval Catholic Church; Muscovy was Orthodox.

<sup>3</sup> The terms Orthodox and Orthodoxy in this paper refer to the Russian Orthodox Church, not Orthodox Theology.

<sup>4</sup> In 1905, following the disastrous war with Japan, revolution beckoned. The Tsar was forced to allow an elected parliament and other reforms, including religious freedom.

passages such as 1 Peter 1:1-9, where Peter argues that suffering is only for a little while and these trials are producing what you want, the salvation of your souls, help evangelical Christians to understand that suffering and trials were part of early church history and should be expected in the current day. These trials should not be fought against but accepted both as suffering for their faith and also as a way that God changes them.

In terms of Biblical material, the other area that evangelicals in Russia draw on is Luther's reformation doctrine of *'salvation by grace through faith alone'* and not through the Church. In the 1860s German settlers in the Ukraine taught this to their Ukrainian farm labourers. A number of them decided to be baptised in the German churches and broke with the Orthodox Church. Rowe sums up their motivation well when he says, *'A religion that was understandable, gave answers to the deep questions of life and did not require a priest had an enormous attraction for the Ukrainian peasants'* (Rowe, 1994, p.17). Ukrainians, and later Russians, wanted a faith they could understand and did not require priests – who were seen as agents of the Tsarist State.<sup>5</sup> The acceptance of this doctrine set them clearly apart from the Orthodox. It also gave them something that they believed in so strongly that it gave them the strength to stand as the other, against Orthodox persecution and the accusation that they were not fully Russian.

### The Theologies of Suffering and Hope

Dostoevsky's character Dmitri Karamazov, in the *Brothers Karamazov*, after he has been arrested, says, *'I want to suffer and by suffering I shall be purified'* (Dostoevsky, 1950, p 618). The concept of suffering is something that all Russians draw on. The history of Russia has been one of brutality, invasion, the Gulag and death; and while there are images of hope, the overall picture is one of suffering. Russians assume that they will suffer, so how do you live with that suffering? The church has developed a theology of suffering which draws on the New Testament concept that trials transform the believer into the likeness of Christ. The theology also draws on the suffering servant motif of Christ, and the expectation that Christians will suffer and be rejected as he was. Solzhenitsyn expressed well the Russian view on suffering, when he said, *'Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either - but right through every human heart'* (Solzhenitsyn, 1974, p.615). Lying in the Gulag with everything in life stripped away, Solzhenitsyn clearly understood that despite all the evil around, the choice that each individual still had was to be good or evil. Evangelicals draw on the theology of the Orthodox Church here as much as developing their own. Both draw on the battle between good and

<sup>5</sup> In 1721 Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate. He wanted to control the Church and effectively made it a department of the Tsarist State. Over time they were unable or unwilling to speak against the Tsar's policies, which made them a target for the Revolutionary movement which grew up in the late nineteenth century.

evil and that Christians need to overcome evil, no matter what the provocation from the surrounding society. They also understand that a person has a choice in how they react - they may have to suffer the pain and dehumanisation of persecution but they do not have to be defined by it; and the choice they have, possibly the only one they have, is how they react. Christ showed the example on the Cross when he said in Luke 23:34: *'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.'*

The Russian proverb, *'Hope dies last'*, is a common Russian hope that even in seemingly impossible circumstance there is still hope for change one day. There is a real danger of fatalism and the acceptance that suffering will always be there and there is nothing that can change it. For the Russian Christian, hope in the transcendent and the eternal gives a completely different reality to hold on to in the midst of suffering. The greater emphasis on the Resurrection of Christ within the Eastern Church also gives strength to draw on and the hope that this brings, both in life here and not just in the eschatological sense. Living in the light of the Resurrection brings the reality of the transcendent into everyday living. This brings a powerful tool for the Russian Christian to draw strength from to counteract the messages and demands under persecution. The Christian is not just living in this world, therefore strength can be drawn in living for the values of the Resurrected Christ and not according to the values of the society around. The hope of the Resurrection also brings something that no government or society can take away. Even if the body is killed the hope remains that the soul will be resurrected, transcending the suffering of this world. Such a hope cannot be robbed by anything in this world. The need for hope is real, as the fatalism is very real when dealing with overwhelming suffering and tragedy, and the real possibility of death before any meaningful change comes in this life.

### **Anabaptist Theology**

The majority of evangelicals in Russia accept Anabaptist theology of the separation of Church and State. During the years of persecution they could draw on the theology which said that they did not have to submit to the State in matters where its policy went against the teachings of the Bible. However there was disagreement within the evangelical movement as to when the Bible required submission and when resistance was allowed. Nevertheless this did give them a context for living as the other in a world that was hostile to them and that they were not required to submit to State policy that was against their beliefs. They understood the consequences would be persecution, but they were willing to pay that price and to suffer for their beliefs.

### **Conclusion: A Matter of Identity**

While the Orthodox were brutally persecuted in the communist period and were 'the other' since the fall of the Soviet Union they have once again sought political power and claim to be the only true Church in Russia. They resent the presence of evangelicals and Catholics, especially foreigners, on the canonical territory of the

Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodox theology does not recognize any Christians outside the Orthodox community. Once again the pressure is there from the Church and media, and to some extent the government, that *'being Russian means to be Orthodox.'*

The tension with being Russian and being evangelical is still a real one that exists. During the years of communist persecution, Biblical material, the theologies of suffering and hope and anabaptist theology, gave a context to survive. While labelled *'enemies of the people'*, there was still a context to say 'we are Christians, we will suffer and so we are enemies of the world'. After Communism, the question of identity has come more to the fore. How am I a Russian Christian if society says to be a Russia Christian is to be Orthodox? The benefit the sources above brought in living under persecution have been a hindrance after Communism. One of the challenges Russian evangelicals now face is whether they will remain as a minority that tries to survive, as during Communism, or will be able to engage with society and influence and shape it, despite their small numbers. These are the questions that evangelicals are currently grappling with and will continue to do so.

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# Response to Conference

Jayne Reaves

I feel honoured to have been asked to be present and respond to the papers that have been presented here at the conference. Given the wide range of topics discussed here, a cohesive and integrated response won't be easy, but I'll certainly give it a go.

My specialty in my theological research is in hospitality, so the concept of 'the other' and the resources involved in reaching out to the other on a theological and academic level are familiar to me. As a woman theologian who has four degrees behind my name and who was trained in and served as a minister in a local Baptist congregation, as a foreigner in a country that is not my home, as a white American Southerner who grew up on the wrong side of the tracks but still forbidden to enter the black part of town growing up, as someone who identifies herself as a feminist and liberation theologian, as a self-identified progressive who is a peace activist and committed to nonviolence, as an English-speaker who has worked in foreign language contexts, and as a heterosexual LGBT ally, I'd like to think I get what it means to be the other, but I know that what makes me other in some contexts makes me one of the same in other contexts. We all have our blind spots. It's part of being human. So I concur with some of the statements about 'other' carrying negative weight – I don't think that's necessarily the case, but, as we talk about 'being the other, I think (as with almost anything else), we must tread carefully and with a great deal of humility.

I've found myself returning to Pádraig's words spoken at the beginning of the conference on several occasions: love or fear? Does how we practise our traditions encourage our response to the other to be out of love or out of fear? Or let's ask it another way – does the other have reason to fear us or love us by how we treat them? Has room been made for the other by our insights here these last few days?

As Glenn and others have pointed out, the textual tradition speaks to radical inclusivity, particularly in Trito-Isaiah<sup>1</sup> as Glenn talked about and in Ruth, Jonah and other texts. These witnesses within scripture give me courage, renew my vision, and push me further into the radically inclusive vision of God's realm. But we must also remember that they sit alongside Ezra, Nehemiah, and other texts which are radically exclusive. The tension, contradiction, disagreement, and definition of who is in and who is out – who is one of us and who is other – is there, side by side, inviting us to wrestle with it and continue the conversation in our current context. As such, I appreciated Jason's assertion that the conversation is never complete.

<sup>1</sup> Glenn Jordan read from Isaiah 56.

These conversations have been taking place for millennia, there are outsiders all the time – but it’s no excuse for us in that we say “there’ll always be the Other” (much in the same way as Jesus said “there will always be the poor”), we must continually strive to work toward inclusion, to negotiate our own mutable boundaries and identity, and to push for a more dignified society committed to the common good that is marked by solidarity for those who are powerless.

And yet, as an educator and an activist, I have to observe that we have circled the question quite a bit over the past few days. There’s no judgment in that – circling is necessary, parameters have to be set, definitions have to be decided upon, strategies must be determined. But where does the rubber hit the road? All this that we’ve said over the last 2 days. ....So what??

The death of Northern Irish police officer Ronan Kerr has been mentioned here. I could not help but think - as Chris referred to the dissenting Presbyterians in Scotland and their justified use of violence – of the so-called dissident republicans who are allegedly responsible for Kerr’s death. When we speak of the other, it is easier for us to consider the somewhat ‘safe’ other: the asylum seeker, the LGBTQI person, the person of another ethnicity. But we get kind of jittery when we think about the other who seeks to harm, to destroy, to threaten our safety. Irish and Northern Irish now have a common enemy to ‘legitimately’ hate (as opposed to the racism that is shown toward migrant workers, etc). It is socially acceptable to ostracize, marginalize, degrade and dehumanize dissident republicans. Protestant and Catholic alike decry their aims, their methods, their very existence. They are a threat to the peace. They must be silenced and done away with.

What would we – as people of faith sitting here in our own relative safety thinking about what it means to be the other - have to say to them today?

John Caputo, a deconstructionist philosopher, talks about this a bit in relation to hospitality. He describes hospitality as one of those ‘words that promise something that they do not quite deliver,’<sup>2</sup> and he states that ‘[w]hat hospitality means seems simple enough: welcoming the other, welcoming the coming of the other into the same’ but he remarks that when most try to be hospitable, one usually invites friends and those ‘whose company we enjoy and from whom we can expect reciprocity...or else people whose favour we are currying.’<sup>3</sup> But when hospitality is practised in this manner, ‘there is a good deal of inhospitality built into our hospitality’ as it tightens the ‘circle of the same’ and only welcomes those ‘who are welcome to begin with, not those who are unwelcome.’<sup>4</sup> Later, Caputo says that

<sup>2</sup> John Caputo (2007), *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007, pp. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Caputo, pp. 75-76.

<sup>4</sup> Caputo, pp. 76.

‘if hospitality is what we say it is – that is, welcoming the other – then ought it not be a matter of welcoming those who are unwelcome...[and] extended beyond our friends to our enemies?’<sup>5</sup> and then he asks the inevitable question:

But what is to say that I will not be murdered in my bed [or have my car, bus or café blown up] by all this hospitality?<sup>6</sup>

Caputo’s answer to these questions is found in Derrida who validates the questions but also says that ‘there would never be any way in principle to eliminate all the risk and still preserve the ideal of hospitality.’<sup>7</sup> To broaden that, I would say that there is no legitimate way to make way for the other that does not also make way for substantial risk.

And the risk isn’t just related to physical safety. For example, in the way homosexuality is often discussed, I’m struck by perceived risks to purity – ritual or cultic purity, spiritual purity, purity of identity – that somehow, welcome or inclusion of the LGBTQ person will taint one’s self, one’s faith or one’s community. And it makes me wonder how much issues of purity are caught up in fear? And I’m just asking questions here – I don’t have the answers - but in relation to cultic practice and identity formation – both now and in biblical era – threats to purity are usually responded to with fear – fear of being cut off, rejected, stained or tainted. Is there another way we can be concerned about purity without fear or is the relationship inevitable? Do we give up purity for love?

This question about love or fear reminds me of a story of two wolves - a Cherokee traditional story - that I keep in my office:

A tribal elder was talking to his grandson about the battle the old man was waging inside himself. He said, “It is between two wolves, my son. One is an evil wolf: Anger, envy, sorrow, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is the good wolf: Joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.” The boy thought this over for a minute, and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?” The elder replied simply: “The one I feed.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Caputo, pp. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Caputo, pp. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Caputo, pp. 76. Caputo refers to a conversation had with Richard Kearney, Jacques Derrida and himself in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, John Caputo and Michael Scanlon, eds. Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000, pp. 130-136 which informed this statement.

<sup>8</sup> This is a traditional story that is lacking in clear original sources. It is most often attributed to the Cherokee nation, but may or may not have originated there.



And so, in the end, what do we do that feeds love and starves fear? How can our identities and boundaries of inclusion and exclusions be formed in such a way that they are based in love and not fear?

I'm not a poet and wasn't planning on doing the haiku – I'd never written one in my life! But as I thought about what'd I'd say today and my reactions to what had been said the previous two days, it came to me and I'll read it again:

*God welcomes us to  
the table, laden and full  
Her apron dirty*

For me, the answer to the questions about how to feed love and form our boundaries in a healthy way is in the practice of hospitality. For me, the differentiation between assimilation and incarnation raised in discussions over the course of these days is in the practice of hospitality. This means being willing to put ourselves, our identities, our communities at risk in radical commitment to welcoming the other, all the while rooting our actions in assurance of our identity as people of God. It includes providing sustenance, and perhaps most importantly forsaking purity for the sake of being willing to get dirty by joining God in God's work in transforming and healing this world.

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**Jason McCann**

$\infty$  dawns!  
>  $\sum$  our parts,  
Come on, Bring it on.

# Biographies of contributors

## 1. David McMillan

David McMillan comes from Belfast and has spent over twenty years in pastoral ministry in Baptist churches in Newry and Belfast. He has experience in a range of community organisations and continues to be involved with various voluntary projects as well as postgraduate research through the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. He is director of Clanrye Initiatives which co-ordinated the 'Being the Other' conference.

## 2. Chris Morris

Chris Morris was born in 1949 in Birmingham. He obtained degrees in Geography and Soil Science in Manchester and Reading, with a course on Irish geography that coincided with the August 1968 unrest in Northern Ireland. In 1971, he moved to Belfast, living for nine months at the bottom of Broadway, opposite an army sangar, as he started a PhD and worked as a graduate demonstrator at QUB. When his parents were asked what their son was doing, they could and did answer "He's working as a demonstrator in Belfast". After the PhD, in 1978 he joined the civil service to work as a statistician and married Janet who acts as a moderating influence (those who know Janet will marvel at someone for whom Janet is "a moderating influence"). During his civil service career, he worked on demography, courts, household income and expenditure, poverty, gross domestic product and settlements before retiring in 2009. Since then he has done a MPhil in Reconciliation Studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics, as well as working on service access and fuel poverty.

## 3. Joshua Searle

Joshua Searle (BA, MA, Oxford; MTh, IBTS Prague) is a PhD candidate in the School of English at Trinity College Dublin. He completed his BA at Oxford University in 2006. He graduated with an MTh (Double Distinction) from IBTS Prague in 2008 and is currently under the supervision of Dr Crawford Gribben at TCD, where he is engaged in doctoral research into interpretations of biblical apocalyptic texts by evangelicals in Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles'. His thesis is entitled *The Hermeneutics of Crisis: Evangelicals, Apocalyptic Eschatology and the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'*. His main interests are Germanic and Slavic languages and baptistic and ecumenical theology. So far he has two peer-reviewed publications to his name: 'Romantismus, Fantasie a Utopie: Teologické Zhodnocení', in Ivana Noble and Jiří Hanuš (eds.), *Křesťanství Romantismus* (CDK: Brno, 2011); and 'The Sermon on the Mount: a Realistic Resource for Christian Discipleship and Spiritual Formation?', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 9 (January, 2009).

#### 4. Jason McCann

Jason Michael McCann is currently researching 'Noah's Ark as a Mythological Representation of the Jerusalem Temple' at the University of Dublin, Trinity College. He has completed undergraduate studies in Theology and Biblical Studies at the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca and the University of Dublin, Trinity College. He is presently the episcopally commissioned preacher and sacramental minister at the Anglican parish of Saint Bartholomew's in the Anglican Archdiocese of Dublin. Over the past ten years he has organised and assisted with various parochial youth and liturgical groups. More recently he has participated in the Irish Youth Connections for Peace initiative which has sought to bring the experiences of Ireland into contact with the experiences of Palestinian Christians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. He has served as a board member for five years with the Youth Leadership Council of the International Council for Christians and Jews, and has been deeply involved with Jewish, Christian and Muslim dialogue. On Mondays he volunteers his dish-washing skills at the Men's Centre in Ballymun, Dublin, where he also assists in FETAC adult education.

#### 5. Femi Oladiipo

Francis Femi Oladiipo, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Oyo, Western Nigeria, has been involved in Justice and Peace work (as animator and later as diocesan coordinator) since 1995. Apart from having first degrees in Philosophy and Theology, he also has G.Dip in Development Studies from Kimmage in 2002 and in 2003, a Masters in Theology from Mater Dei Institute, where he is currently pursuing a PhD.

#### 6. Lynn O'Gorman Latchford

Lynn O'Gorman Latchford is a writer, poet, photographer, an Oblate to St Mary's Abbey. She is pursuing Doctoral research in Theology on Benedictine Monasticism and New Monasticism at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland following Masters work in Psychoanalytical Studies at Trinity concurrent with Masters work in Systematic Theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology, Seton Hall University, USA. She was awarded the 2007 International Poet's Award for the poem "Unmoving," Trinity's 2008 Literary Journal College Green publication of "Fires of Connemara," and is a leader and co-founder of the international spiritual movement of New Monasticism.

#### 7. Charles Beattie

Charles Beattie is a lecturer in Old Testament at the ECWA theological Seminary in Jos, Nigeria, and is studying for his PhD at Queen's University Belfast. Following on from his MPhil on 'Human Connectedness to Land in Covenant and Creation' in the book of Genesis, he is working on issues relating to the concept of the inheritance of land in the Old Testament. His interest in spatiality and the theology of 'earth' is a direct result of growing up with the conflict in Northern Ireland.

## 8. Fran Porter

Fran Porter is the Irish Peace Centres Theological Commentator for 2011. Fran is a social and theological researcher, writer and teacher with particular interests in socially engaged theology and feminist engagement with Christianity. She has an MSc and PhD in Women's Studies from the University of Ulster, a BA in Theology from the London School of Theology, and is an associate of the Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration at Coventry University involved with projects in their Faith Communities and Regeneration strand. Fran is author of *It Will Not Be Taken Away From Her: A Feminist Engagement with Women's Christian Experience* (2004, DLT); *Changing Women, Changing Worlds: Evangelical Women in Church, Community and Politics* (2002, Blackstaff); and *Faith in a Plural Society: The Values, Attitudes and Practices of Churches in Protecting Minority Participation* (2008, CCCI).

## 9. Glenn Jordan

Glenn Jordan is originally from Bray in Co Wicklow and has lived in Northern Ireland since 1987. He is married to Adrienne and they have two teenage children, Philippa and Christopher. Glenn works on the Skainos Project, an urban regeneration project in inner East Belfast, which has grown out of the work of East Belfast Mission. He is also a PhD student at Queen's, investigating urban renewal through the lens of Third Isaiah.

## 10. Paula Tabakin

Paula Tabakin was born in South Africa to an Irish mother and Jewish father. Paula was brought up in the Reform Jewish tradition. At the age of twelve her family moved to Israel where she went on to serve in the Israeli Army and graduated from Tel Aviv University with a BA in Community Theatre working closely with both Jewish and Arab community groups on drama based co-existence projects. Paula moved to Belfast in 2003, taught Judaism and Hebrew at the Belfast Jewish community Sunday school and worked as the Community Development officer for the community. She is now active in Northern Ireland Friends of Israel.

## 11. Matt Scrimgeour

Matt Scrimgeour has worked for the past four years at Corrymeela Ballycastle, where his main role is the oversight of programme related logistics for incoming groups. He is married to Heidi with whom he shares two delightfully raucous dependents: Zack (4) and Edan (6). They live together in Ballycastle, County Antrim. Interests include movement, spirituality, stories, feasting, theology, friends and sustainability.

## 12. Andy Hill

Andrew Hill is a 1998 graduate of Loyola University School of Law in New Orleans. He holds an undergraduate degree in English and Philosophy from St. Mary's University

(TX), and a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of St. Thomas (TX). He was previously a Senior Lecturer of Law and Ethics at St. Mary's University, and is now studying human rights as a postgraduate research student at the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin. He also works for the Corrymeela Community, which sponsors a peace and reconciliation centre in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland, where he lives with his wife, Mary Lynne Hill, Ph.D., and their son, Andrew James Hill.

### **13. Ebenezer Segatu (Tadesse)**

Ebenezer was born and raised in an evangelical Christian family in Ethiopia, 30 miles from the capital city, Addis Ababa. Until his first high school year Ethiopia was under a communist government which banned most evangelical churches. Consequently, from an early age he learned the cost of maintaining faith in a hostile environment. After finishing high school he went to a teachers' college and was a language teacher for two years. He later went to the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa after which he ministered among university students and refugees under different Christian organizations. While working among Sudanese refugees in 2006 he met his wife Edwina Dewart who had travelled from Ireland to work in Ethiopia. In 2008 he came to Ireland to study in Belfast Bible College and later the Irish Baptist College where he is completing an MA in theology. Ebenezer and Edwina currently live in Dublin.

### **14. Eamonn Walls**

Eamonn Walls studied theology at Union Seminary and Edgehill College, and is currently working for a Masters in Cognitive Science at Queen's University Belfast. His research interests usually involve annoying his professors with deliberately provocative and unconventional theories. In his spare time he likes playing chess and having adventures.

### **15. Maithrie White**

Maithrie White completed her honours degree in English Literature at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and then lectured at the University of Jayawardenepura for five years before coming to the UK. Her cross disciplinary PhD in Literature and Critical Theory (with smatterings of Philosophy and Theology) at the University of Nottingham involved dabbling in Fantasy and Science Fiction, with a spare chapter on Monty Python. She completed her doctorate in 2006 and returned to Sri Lanka where she lectured for a couple of years, eventually becoming the Head of the Department of English where she experienced the zombied existence of infinite babble at faculty meetings. She migrated to Northern Ireland after her marriage. She is currently the editor of the International Journal of Ethnic and Social Studies and is the founder and Chair of Transforming the Mind – the UK's Annual Christian Postgraduate Conference. She enjoys dabbling with theology, theory, and the magic of words, and enjoys mixing them all up one way or another. She is a writer and is

currently exploring the publication of her fiction while pursuing a course in Theology in Dublin. She continues to watch Top Gear, Monty Python and Black Adder with alarming regularity.

### **16. Barry Trainor**

Barry Trainor was born and raised in the Roman Catholic tradition in Armagh and worked for more than twenty years as a manager in the clothing industry in Armagh, Co. Monaghan and Dublin. He has a vibrant interest in discovering the nature of God's relationship with humankind coupled with the significance of faith, particularly in its many relationships with science and technology in the modern world. Barry is currently a student with the Priory Institute (a Dominican centre for Theological studies) in Tallaght, Dublin, in association with The University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, where he is working to achieve a BA in Theology.

### **17. Trevor Warner**

Trevor Warner has worked with Operation Mobilisation in St. Petersburg, Russia for 10 years. OM partnered with Russian Evangelical Churches, in areas such as training conferences, evangelism and social ministries, including alcohol and drug rehab centres. Trevor's roles in Russia included organising conferences and delivering teaching both at conferences and in a Bible College setting. Trevor was also the Director of OM Russia for 2 years. He is now based in N. Ireland and will start PhD studies in Theology at International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague in September 2011.

### **18. Jayme Reaves**

Jayme Reaves is a PhD candidate in political inter-cultural theology with a thesis specializing in protective hospitality at the Irish School of Ecumenics and is based in Belfast. She hails from the gritty, yet genteel, American South but has a penchant for living in post-conflict areas such as Bosnia, Croatia and now Northern Ireland. When not slaving over theological texts and attempts to save the world, she loves cooking, whiling away hours on social media sites and long walks on the beach.

## Thanks

Thanks to the Irish Peace Centres (IPC) for having the vision and the courage to sponsor theological inquiry among theological students. The investment of resources in this project indicates an awareness that engaging with those involved in theological learning (whatever their age or background) makes strategic sense if there is to be a renewed openness and encounter within the Christian and other religious traditions on the Island. Beyond that such engagement can contribute much to peace and better understanding.

Thanks to Pádraig Ó Tuama for his inspirational initiative in charting the course for this project and the imaginative and challenging theme of 'Being the Other'. As a visionary, poet and encourager Pádraig brings a unique contribution to the work of IPC and the 'Being the Other' project in particular.

Special thanks to Patrick (Wacker) Kane who, working on behalf of Clanrye Initiatives, carried most of the burden of recruiting contributors for the conference as well as keeping participants up to speed on developments and ensuring completed work arrived within the deadlines. Patrick's gifts as a facilitator and his insight, based on his experience working in both Dublin and Northern Ireland, were invaluable assets for the project.

Thanks to the good folks at the Armagh City Hotel who were a pleasure to deal with and made the event all the more pleasurable.

Thanks to Irish Peace Centres staff, Laura and Owen, who made the effort to support the conference by joining for part of the time and also made their own contributions. Many thanks to Fran Porter, who not only prepared and delivered the keynote address and reviewed the essays, but also participated in all aspects of the conference. Fran's willingness to make herself available to discuss individual papers and ideas was much appreciated by many of the contributors.

Thanks to the faculty and staff of theological and academic institutions, South and North, who promoted the conference among their students. Their continued support for IPC theological enterprises is much appreciated and critical to the success of these ventures.

Finally, a sincere thanks to all the student contributors who willingly engaged in this project and made the conference such a worthwhile event and created this legacy of publications to challenge and stimulate the thinking of others.

David McMillan









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5 Weavers Court Business Park  
Linfield Road  
Belfast BT12 5GH  
Northern Ireland

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9032 1462  
Fax: +44 (0) 28 9089 1000  
Email: [info@irishpeacecentres.org](mailto:info@irishpeacecentres.org)  
Web: [www.irishpeacecentres.org](http://www.irishpeacecentres.org)



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