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Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.

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Man's Mind in God's Perspective – Part I

How can we transform our mind from a secular stronghold to a place inhabited by the Spirit of God?

by Bruce Yocum

Bruce Yocum is President of Christ the King Association and a member of the International Executive Council of [The Sword of the Spirit](#). This article was originally published in New Covenant Magazine, March 1977. Bruce states he would write this article somewhat differently today, but he is happy enough to let us reproduce it in its original form. The article will continue next month.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN MIND

There is a significant difference between the Christian mind and the secular mind. The Christian mind approaches life from a different point than the secular mind and moves toward a different goal. This profoundly affects the way the Christian looks at life. I am indebted to Harry Blamire's book, [The Christian Mind](#), for fresh insight into the characteristics of the Christian, as opposed to the secular, mind.

First, a Christian approaches and thinks about life from the perspective of eternity.

He affirms that there is life after death, that there is more to our existence than the life we experience in this world. He is convinced that there is a second death which is more conclusive and decisive than physical death.

Because a Christian is not fettered by a view of life bound to this world alone, his mind operates in a radically different sphere than the secular mind. A Christian hears Jesus ask, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" and immediately responds, "Nothing, absolutely nothing." He agrees with Paul that "if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Why? Because if there is no eternal life then this life on earth has been in vain, his hopes a mockery. But he knows that "in fact Christ has been raised from the dead," and that from him comes "the resurrection of his eternal perspective, the hope and the promise that shape all his thinking.

Second, the Christian views reality from a supernatural perspective.

He believes that God acts in the world in a way that goes beyond natural processes. It comes as no surprise to him that God heals, that he intervenes to alter the direction of events, that he reveals his mind to his people.

Over the past century, efforts to “demythologize” Scripture have done considerable damage to this perspective. Often, demythologizing Scripture means stripping it of its supernatural elements and constructing a theory that explains those events in natural terms. According to this viewpoint, no one in Scripture is healed, no demons are cast out, and no miracles occur because such events are “myths” told in supernatural terms in order to make a certain point, or to convey a sense of God’s power, or for any number of reasons. Although there may have been some good insights derived from demythologizing Scripture, the overall effect has been to undermine the Bible and weaken the Christian’s supernatural perspective.

At its root, in fact, this kind of thinking is incompatible with faith in God because it contends that the Lord does not act in a miraculous way in the world. It limits God, deciding what he can and cannot do. Over against that, the Christian must constantly reaffirm that God is present in the world, continually acting to guide and heal his people.

Third, the Christian mind perceives truth as objective, knowable and universal.

Opposed to this is the current popular understanding of truth as subjective, unknowable, and relative to circumstances. The latter view is easy to characterize. Imagine that you’ve just told someone about the Lord and the changes he’s accomplished in your life. As you finish, your listener says, “That’s great! I’m glad you can get into that.” “Well, wait a minute,” you say. “I just told you about the Lord, the creator of the universe, and how he’s working in my life.” “I’m happy for you,” your listener responds. “I’m glad it does something for you. But me, I like to meditate. Reality is different for me, it doesn’t work the same way it does for you. You relate to your reality and I’ll relate to mine.”

What an enormous perversion of the truth! In essence, the listener is saying that whatever helps you become “a good person, ‘whatever makes you feel happy and “fulfilled,” is reality and truth for you. The secular mind of today does not admit the possibility of an ultimate truth and reality that applies to all men and women regardless of how it makes them feel. But the Christian asserts that there is objective, ultimate truth that everyone can know—in fact, that it is critical for everyone to know. Jesus didn’t come to the Pharisees and say, “Well, you’re not accepting me but that’s okay. I can see where you’re coming from and it’s evident that you’re not ready for this.” He came bringing the truth; if they rejected him, they rejected truth.

The Christian must resist the tendency of the secular mind to reduce the truth to likes and dislikes, to current ideas and popular trends. The Christian knows that ultimate truth is objective, firmly established, steady, and reliable. It is not conceived of one day and discarded the next.

Fourth, the Christian submits his mind to the authority of God and his word.

To an age in revolt against authority, this submission is astounding, distasteful. The secular mind insists that it is its own authority, that as far as possible it is free from the restraints of an order imposed from above. The Christian mind, however, recognizes that the very nature of God himself calls forth complete obedience. Confronted with the awesome, all-powerful, eternal God, the Christian responds in utter submission. For him, there can be no shifting back and forth, no arbitrary recognition of God’s authority in one situation and rejection of it in another.

Fifth, the Christian knows that the most important truths are revealed.

In other words, the truths that lie at the very heart of reality, the truths concerning who God is and who we are, have been revealed to us by God himself. We could never have learned of the Trinity or the love of God on our own. The secular mind, on the other hand, operates apart from revelation and, consequently, has cast off the most significant truths of life, asserting the primacy of revealed truth doesn’t at all denigrate truths arrived at through science and other disciplines; it simply puts them in the proper perspective. No matter what technological advances we make, no matter what areas of study we pursue, if we’re not laying hold of the truths that God has revealed our studies won’t much avail.

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The Grace of Pentecost

What happened to the human race on the Day of Pentecost and what does it mean for us today?

by Steve Clark

The Christian feast of Pentecost fulfills the old covenant feast

For Christians, Pentecost commonly refers to the event that is described in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. It is the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples of Jesus, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. It is, in other words, the day referred to in John 7:39 in which the Holy Spirit was given, that is, was given in an abiding or ongoing way to human beings who had come to believe in Christ.

Pentecost was instituted in the Old Testament. In fact, it is only a Christian or new covenant feast because the new covenant is built upon the old and fulfills what is in the old, including its feasts. Most of us can look through the whole Old Testament in the Bible we normally use and not find any references to Pentecost. That is one of the reasons why we are surprised at the idea that Pentecost is an old covenant feast. But it is mentioned somewhat often in the Old Testament under the name of the Feast of Weeks. Pentecost means "fiftieth," and the day marks the festal conclusion to the week of weeks that made up Passover season (see Leviticus 23:15-16). Most English Bibles, following the Greek text, translate the name of the feast as "Pentecost" in the New Testament and, following the Hebrew, "the Feast of Weeks" in the Old Testament, but they are the same feast.

Pentecost was a harvest feast, the feast in which the first sheaf of the wheat harvest was offered to the Lord in thanksgiving for the harvest, acknowledging him as the giver of the harvest. At the time of Jesus and the apostles, however, it also seems to have been understood as the feast that celebrated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, which occurred about fifty days after the Exodus. That means that we can read about the first Day of Pentecost in Exodus 19 and 20. In doing that, we learn a great deal about the new covenant Day of Pentecost.

It is important that the original Day of Pentecost occurred right after the Exodus. It is also significant that it occurred on the mountain of Sinai, which in Exodus 24 is called "the mountain of God." It was a mountain that belonged to God, one on which he was especially present. Mount Sinai, therefore, was a natural temple. The people of Israel were encamped before the place where the Lord was especially present.

On the Day of Pentecost at Sinai, then, God established a relationship with a people, the people of Israel. That relationship was covenantal and corporate, a committed relationship with a body of people. It involved how they

lived their ongoing daily life. This, then, is what God was about when he redeemed his people. Redemption is not an end in itself, but it is for a purpose. God redeems people so that they might come to him and live as his people. This was the purpose of the redemption that occurred at the Passover and in the Exodus. This, as we shall see, is the purpose of the redemption that occurs in the new covenant as well.

The Event of Pentecost in Acts 2 (The Experience)



When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

(Acts 2:1-4)

The second chapter of Acts begins with the description of the outpouring of the Spirit. While the first disciples were together, something striking happened to them. It had some notable similarities to what had happened on Sinai.

There was a sound like a mighty wind, a strong blowing sound. There was also, even more important, fire, the sign of God's presence when he appeared in the burning bush and in the pillar of fire. As we have seen, fire is a symbol for God. It is powerful enough to destroy. For those things ready to receive it, however, it can purify or refine. It can heat something up, giving a knife, for instance, the ability to burn or a pot the capacity to cook. It can unite things when, for instance, it bakes bread or fuses two pieces of metal together. Just as God descended in fire on Sinai to manifest himself to his people, so he descended on Mount Zion.

This time, however, God's descent was different. At Sinai he stood before them so that he might speak to them externally. On Mount Zion, however, the fire parted into separate flames, everyone will make it through that time of trial, because not everyone will have experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and so be prepared. Only those who "call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Peter then explained who the Lord is whom people need to call upon:

They showed that Jesus was not just a condemned insurrectionist or blasphemer but the Lord and Christ. Only the

Lord and Christ would be in the kind of relationship with the Father that meant he could pour out the Holy Spirit.

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." (Acts 2:37-39)

The cause of what had happened, of the experience that drew the crowds attention, was the Lord himself. More precisely, it was the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, which put him in a position to pour out the Holy Spirit. The fulfillment of the Promise, then, came through the resurrection and ascension of Christ, events human beings could not see but which produced results in our world human beings could and still can see. It was those results that impressed the crowd.

As a result of Peter's preaching, many of those who had heard him were "cut to the heart," affected in a way that meant they were ready to change. They desired to turn to the Lord. Peter then explained to them how they could do that. They needed to repent and be baptized, not with the baptism of John but in the name of Jesus Christ. As a result of that they too would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That gift was available not just to the original disciples but to everyone whom the Lord calls to himself.

The Result



So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

(Acts 2:41-43)

Many accepted what Peter said and were baptized. Then it says, "There were added" three thousand people. They were added to a community, the body of believers in Christ, the Christian people, the first Christian church. A

description of this community follows in Acts 2:42-47. A very similar description can be found in Acts 4:32-37.

The first item in the description of the first Christian community, the apostles' teaching and fellowship [community], possibly refers to the common life created by the teaching about Christ and the new covenant in him, possibly to the regular gatherings with the apostles. The breaking of bread probably refers to what we would call the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. The prayers is probably the regular daily and weekly prayers celebrated by the old covenant people, a pattern of prayer that was continued by believers in Christ. The grace of Pentecost, then, produced a renewal in worship of the Lord God.

The result was powerful witness, something that produced the fear of the Lord in others. This was reinforced by "many signs and wonders done through the apostles" because of the new power they had received through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

The description continues by saying that all the believers were together and had all things in common. The early Christians did not scatter, filled with the Spirit and directed by him to go out into the entire world. The opposite happened. They came together and formed a community that was more united than human beings had been since the Tower of Babel or, more likely, since the Fall itself. Their oneness was a sign of the Spirit's being in them.

They were together. Even though, as is clear from the description of the first Christians in the early chapters of Acts, they all did not live in one building or on one plot of ground, they came together regularly and shared their lives in various ways. They also had "all things in common." This probably did not mean that they had the equivalent of one bank account, a system of common finances, but that they recognized the claim that their brothers and sisters in Christ had upon their personal finances and so were willing to share what they had when others had need. The first Christians had become "spiritual" in a new way, and this was not just expressed in direct relationship with God but also in relationship with one another. The grace of Pentecost, then, produced a renewal in community, what we might speak of as Christian community.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

The new life of the first believers was expressed partly in sharing in the temple prayers and partly in eucharistic gatherings among themselves. They were visible enough to those around them, and their spiritual commitment was obvious enough, that their life had an impact on others. No doubt there was individual evangelism, but the account in Acts 2 emphasizes that it was their life together that impacted others. The result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a community living "in the Spirit," and this drew others to the Lord. The grace of Pentecost, then, produced effective evangelism.

The New Covenant blessing

Pentecost occurred because the Lord had a purpose in redeeming us. The Holy Spirit was poured out not just so that our sins could be forgiven, although they needed to be forgiven for us to receive the outpouring. The Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost on Mount Zion almost two thousand years ago—so that the purpose of Pentecost on Mount Sinai could be accomplished effectively—so that there could be a redeemed people in covenant relationship with God, a people who love God and love their neighbor.

The gift of the Spirit makes a change so that Christians should not be just a people who read the Law, the expression of God's will, and then try to live it on their own. As Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 3:3, new covenant people who have

received the gift of the Spirit should be "a letter from Christ delivered by us [to be known and read by all men], written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts [literally, hearts of flesh]." A body of Christians should be a people in whom the prophecy of Ezekiel has been fulfilled. The law should be written inside of them and should change the way they live. As a result, others should be able to "know and read" their lives and come to know the truth of the gospel.

We have "a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

[Steve Clark is President of [The Sword of the Spirit](#). This article is adapted from his book *Charismatic Spirituality: The Work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and Practice*, copyright © 2004 by Stephen B. Clark and published by [Servant Books](#), a division of Saint Anthony Messenger Press. Used with permission.]

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A Transgenerational Call: *Building Christian communities for generations to come*

By Bob Tedesco

During the 1960s and 1970s—a time marked by sudden and powerful social upheaval—a worldwide movement of Christian communities began working to strengthen faith and family life. In our current age of surf-the-net “virtual” relationships the need for stable transgenerational communities of faith is even more profound. Bob Tedesco, President of the [North American Region](#) of The Sword of the Spirit, and a founding leader of the [People of God](#) community in Coraopolis and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, addresses this need and challenge facing covenant communities today. Building transgenerational communities takes decades of hard work and cooperation among parents, community leaders, and youth workers. Bob offers hope, wisdom, and insight for moving forward as transgenerational communities.

Why build transgenerational communities?

[The Sword of the Spirit](#) is a worldwide “community of communities,” and we strive to be a community of disciples on mission. We are also communities with singles, families and many children. For our first decades [from the 1970s through the 1990s] we did many things for our children: youth programs, summer camp, youth retreats, high school groups. But, in many ways, we were still communities of adults who had heard a call to live a common Christian way of life within a network of relationships—Christian communities.

Over those many early years we watched with dismay the effects of modern culture on many of our “community kids” who were not doing so well. This, in spite of the many helps we had in place. The secularized culture was having increasing influence on our children, especially during their college years.

Then in the mid 1990s, we heard a call from the Lord to be a transgenerational community of communities. That is, the parents, the local community and the regional youth workers working together to pass on our vision and our call along with our faith in Christ to the next generation. Our children as adults would then stand with us in building the people that he has called us to be. They too would then train and raise their children to be a part of this people.

Called across generational lines

A number of our communities have had some success in living a transgenerational life and the number of three-

generation families within communities has been growing in recent years. We believe that this call includes most, or at least many of our children – to join in building a worldwide bulwark of communities of disciples on mission.

We believe that the call to be a transgenerational community is fundamentally rooted in God's plan and purpose for the human race and call to his whole church – to be a new humanity in which the image of God is restored and through which God is served. [See Steve Clark's article on [Building a Christian Society](#).]

Some Scriptural directives

We can understand from the Scriptures that God desires fruitfulness in marriage, in Christian discipleship, and in the transmission of the faith to future generations.

- “And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply...’” Genesis 1:28
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” Matthew 29: 19-20
- “And what you have heard from me before many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Timothy 2:2

Gathering these broad instructions together, I would say that Christ calls us as disciples to: 1) raise children in the Lord; 2) make fully formed disciples for Christ (presumably including our children), and 3) to raise them up in a way that forms them and equips them to also make disciples of others for the Lord.

So, our children are not called to be weak disciples of Christ, but radical ones...a scary thought for some parents. As a parent and grandparent, I encourage us to think radical and complete in our discipling of our children. Jesus said, “Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.” So we have that command; but it is also a great joy – to see one's own grandchild working to extend the kingdom of God!

What's at stake?

Everything's at stake when it comes to passing on the faith and forming the next generation for radical discipleship and mission. Our Christian communities, our children, our families are all at stake in this daunting task. Nominal Christian living no longer works in today's toxic culture. So much of our children's faith is being “etched” and scarred in the acid rain of doubt and narcissism. Christian family alone is no longer capable of effectively passing on the faith. Parishes are no longer capable. More is needed. Many models of renewal communities are not capable of passing on the faith. Long before the great cathedrals of Europe emptied, Europe must have gone through a stage where it would have been correct to say, “Nothing is working.” Much of Western society has passed that point, and the decline has the added concern of societal and cultural decay. In other words, more is needed than just getting people back into church. Our children will need to be radical, formed disciples to survive spiritually and to be fruitful for the Lord over the long haul.

Three gauntlets children face

From my observation and experience, parents can do a fairly decent job of raising their children until about age 12 or 13. Then comes high school. Quite a few children lose their direction in these difficult years. Yet many do survive, or even do well! Then, for many, comes the second gauntlet: university (or post high school). This time is not only trying, but it is usually lived and experienced far removed from the parent's ability to help. As many of our children have experienced, it can be a black hole of doubt, skepticism and hedonism. For many of those who have survived these “fiery furnaces” a third challenge looms...courtship. Not marrying wisely has proved the undoing for a lot of our children who had gone through decades of Christian formation and family life.

Some things that families can do

If we want to pass on our faith effectively and train our young people for mission, then I think that parents and pastoral workers need to do the following:

1. Face up to our increasing need for help in the teen years and beyond.

2. Train our children in the necessary art of making life's decisions as a disciple and not primarily for self-fulfillment, happiness, self image, self...self, etc. Christ first! His kingdom first! We need to forget about normal. Normal is a moving target and it is moving in the wrong direction. If we succeed in raising our children to be normal, they will be self-centered not Christ-centered.
3. We need to help our young people to not make decisions that disconnect them from the Christian people and the place which God has prepared for them.
4. Support every effort to build transgenerational relationships and life in your community and region;
5. Support pastoral workers who are trained and dedicated to helping young people grow into maturity, discipleship, and Christian service. For our communities in The Sword of the Spirit, one of the key pieces of our overall transgenerational strategy is The Servants of the Word, an ecumenical, lay missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord, who dedicate much for their time and resources to helping young people grow in the Lord. We can help them with our support, and encourage our own sons to consider the calling to brotherhood life and mission with The Servants of the Word.
6. Be educated in The Sword of the Spirit resources for courtship.

Some things communities can do

As communities in The Sword of the Spirit we need to:

1. Have a long-range plan to be transgenerational locally, and to cooperate with regional work and the work of bringing people into our life in a way that people support and welcome our youth.
2. Prepare married couples to be mentors to people during courtship, and develop resources to help people during courtship—now, even before they are needed.
3. Support a good inter-community cooperation in helping our young disciples to mature to a level at which they can in turn help others to be disciples of Christ.

On the threshold

After decades of work and prayer The Sword of the Spirit is on the threshold of actually becoming a transgenerational people. The Lord has been faithful to us and patient. He has been empowering us, and the promise is at last so close that it is inspiring us to enter the work in a more committed way. He is in our midst, he has shown us his plan, and we have made great progress. Brothers and sisters, let us give all of our hearts to him and to what he is building in our midst.

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Building a Christian Society — Part II

The Lord planted in the human heart a hunger for genuine family and community relationships

by Steve Clark

ARE ROLES LIMITING?

To modern people, social roles may seem limiting, inauthentic, and discriminatory. Are they? One of the more frequent objections to social roles in general is the view that social roles are limiting. They prescribe patterns of social behavior without consulting the preferences of the individuals involved and without allowing them the opportunity to take a previously uncharted course.

Social roles are limiting, but they are limiting in the way any structure is limiting. The human skeleton limits the human body in its movement, but it also makes the human body stronger and more versatile than the amoeba. A highway limits the places a car can go, but the observance of that limitation allows the development of a travel network that yields far greater mobility than overland travel at will.

Roles are limiting. Moreover, social roles are more limiting than functional roles because they are more stable, long lasting, and affect almost every area of a person's life. As with other effective structures, though, the limitations imposed by social roles reap great benefits—in this case, the establishment of a stable and peaceful pattern of social life which allows life to flourish and which provides for the group's needs. Social roles do not have to be rigid, but they do have to be stable enough and uniform enough to provide a sound basis for personal relationships. Those who

object to roles as being limiting do not understand the value of relational social structure in promoting communal life.

ARE ROLES INAUTHENTIC?

Two other objections to social roles in general are often raised. They are similar to the objection that social roles limit the individual. The first rejects social roles as being inauthentic; the second argues that individuals should change their social roles as they see fit.

Those who reject social roles as inauthentic object that they make an individual conform needlessly to the expectations of others. They force an individual to understand himself in relationship to others, rather than as a “real” person in his own right. They are imposed from outside, alien to the real inner person.

This type of objection is partly a product of the dichotomy which technological society creates between the functional world with its highly structured relationships and the personal world, which ideally is supposed to be unstructured and spontaneous. Most contemporary people have little or no experience of committed relationships within a large, cohesive, structured relational grouping, and they perceive such groupings as a threat to their identity. Another source of this objection to social roles is alienation from all traditional social groupings and relationships, often including the family and the church. This sense of alienation is produced in large part by modern ideologies whose goal is to form an individualized, functionally-efficient technological society.

Social roles may look “inauthentic” from the vantage point of technological society, but those in a genuine communal grouping do not experience them as ship, but is instead produced by relationship.

The common expectations defined by social roles can also be experienced as a great aid to communal life, not as a stifling bondage. Social roles free people from tensions which arise from the constant effort of working or living around differing expectations. Rather than being humanly inauthentic, social roles correspond to a genuine inner hunger in the human race for stable, committed personal relationships.

WHY NOT CREATE OUR OWN ROLES?

The second objection involves only a partial denial of social roles. This objection is raised by people who understand the need for some form of social roles but who feel that each person or group should create these roles according to their preferences or needs. Such a view betrays the basic individualism inherent in at least what has historically been the “Liberal” approach to technological society. This approach to social life does not aim at establishing communal relationships on a broad scale but at creating a number of small independent groups, each following different principles of social life.

In reality, this approach is unworkable. Social roles cannot be successfully improvised or devised anew by every social grouping. To devise a successful set of social roles is a great challenge. Those who attempt to create social roles anew normally make serious “ecological errors,” errors that arise because of the complexity of the system and the difficulty of fully comprehending all the relevant factors. Unfortunately such ecological errors are not discovered quickly. For example, only after a generation has passed can a group discover the damage done by a new theory of child rearing.

Moreover, the task of devising new social roles demands a great deal of creativity and a breadth of wisdom that few people possess and almost no one possesses alone. It is enlightening to see how many primitive and traditional peoples can handle birth, death, and marriage, and all occasions of celebration and mourning in a way which cares for the people’s needs and allows them to express their deepest thoughts and experiences. By contrast, people in technological society are often incapable of handling these occasions in anything more than a perfunctory manner that is traumatic or disappointing for those involved. The social roles and social structure needed for a successful corporate human existence cannot be devised anew by every social grouping.

There are two other major reasons for approaching social roles in a stable and relatively uniform way within a society or a community. First, there is a great advantage, especially in a technological society, in not having to constantly work at developing social roles. People in technological society spend much of their time in situations which call for a high degree of change and often creativity. They need an area of life where they can rest from such effort, confident of stable support and commitment, with a clear understanding of how to behave in relationship to others. If social relationships are turned into as much of a task as work relationships currently are in our society, then much of their purpose and usefulness has been lost.

Second, an isolated family or small group lacks the strength needed to develop a pattern of social roles different from the surrounding society. The family unit in technological society is not a total environment. It cannot single-handedly resist the currents of society which influence its members through the school system, the work site, the neighborhood, friends, and the media. Social roles cannot be left to the discretion and ingenuity of each small societal unit, but must instead be developed and sustained consistently within a larger social grouping.

THE QUESTION OF DISCRIMINATION

In technological society, objections are raised to all types of social roles. Roles built on the parent-child relationship, the teacher-student relationship, the employer-employee relationship, and differences in age and sex are all dismissed or functionalized. Social roles based on differences in sex, in particular, evoke some of the most heated negative responses. Two types of objections to social roles in general arise especially in connection with men's and women's roles: that these roles are discriminatory, and that they foster stereotypes.

The idea that social roles based on sex differences are discriminatory has been vigorously advanced within the feminist movement. Feminists have consistently attempted to equate racial differences and sex differences, and to say by analogy that making distinctions between people on the basis of sex is the same as making distinctions between people on the basis of race. The term "sexism" has been coined to express this similarity. Feminists have thus been able to capitalize on the widespread social disapproval of racism by portraying distinctions between men and women as "racism" against women.

This equation of race and sex falsely presumes that the two issues are the same in all significant respects. However, racial distinctions occur between social groupings whereas sexual distinctions occur within social groupings. Barring someone from a position solely on the basis of race is discrimination. It is a way of preserving an advantage for one's own social group. Barring someone from a position because she is a woman might be discrimination, especially in a functionally organized grouping, such as a modern business firm. However, within a relational grouping a sexual distinction may well be a useful and proper attempt to establish an effective social structure through social roles. Such roles need to be ascribed rather than achieved. In relational groupings, where the primary concern is for relationships and not function, the observance of certain distinctions between people on the basis of age and sex rather than competency is not necessarily discrimination. It is a way to maintain and strengthen social roles.

FOSTERING STEREOTYPES

The second objection often made to social roles based on sex differences is that such roles foster stereotypes. This objection also arises from the equation between race and sex. Stereotypes of different races often lead to discrimination or to the treatment of all members of a race as inferior. To be sure, there are stereotypes of men and women that are harmful and scientifically inaccurate. For example, an idea that women are deficient in intelligence or ability would be both disrespectful and false. The primary differences between men and women do not lie in ability but in their varying responses within personal relationships. However, the idea that women are primarily interested in family life and children should not be considered a stereotype. It strengthens a social role of great importance, and fits with much of the available scientific data. In effect, the attack on stereotypes of women is often an attack on recognizing the genuine differences between men and women and also an attack on the reinforcement of stable social roles.

Though many people in modern society object to social roles, such roles play an integral part in the formation of any truly communal lifestyle and in the authentic Christian approach to social structure. Social roles are the backbone of all relational groupings. It is no accident that where social roles are weak, personal relationship is weak. Social roles are an important way of bringing strength to personal relationships. In fact, community disintegrates when a purely functional or informal approach to roles prevails.

The Lord planted in the human heart a hunger for genuine family and community relationships. He intended to satisfy that hunger by sending his Son Jesus to restore his creation and to form those who believe in him into a new people. If God's full purpose for his people in the 21st century is to be fulfilled, the Christian people must understand and apply the scriptural teaching on community, personal relationships, and social roles.

[Steve Clark is President of [The Sword of the Spirit](#). This article is adapted and abridged from his book *Man and Woman in Christ*, copyright © 1980 by Stephen B. Clark and published by [Tabor House Books](#). To see [Part I](#) of this article, go to the [May 2007 Issue](#).]

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The widow's son at Nain rising to life - by [William Hole](#)

Restored to Life: The Raising of the Widow's Son by Jesus

by Jeanne Kun

Jesus meets tragic loss with compassion

As Jesus and his followers approached Nain, a town lying to the southwest of the Sea of Galilee, they met a procession of mourners accompanying a widow who was about to bury her only son. Shortly before, Jesus had healed a man so ill that he had been about to die (Luke 7:2-10). Now, in a scene charged with dramatic intensity, the Lord—the “Author of life” (Acts 3:15)—encountered a man already dead and showed his power over death.

Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of the weeping mother. *Esplanchnisthe*, the Greek expression Luke used to describe Jesus’ feeling, means “to be filled with heartfelt mercy,” “to have mercy from one’s inner core.” Jesus’ heart went out to the woman in her painful loss, and he recognized the hardship of her situation, as well. Without husband and son, she had no male protector and provider, no economic security. Without any means of earning a living, she would be solely dependent on the charity of others. Seeing her grief and need, Jesus immediately acted on her behalf.

Death submitted to Jesus' authority

Since burying the dead was a meritorious work of mercy (Tobit 1:17; Sirach 38:16-17), friends and neighbors of the woman and her son, townspeople, and perhaps even hired mourners and musicians would have been part of the funeral procession. Jesus halted the procession by touching the bier, and probably signaled to the bearers to set the bier down. Then, taking everyone by surprise, he said, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” (Luke 7:14). The words Jesus spoke were a command addressed directly to the corpse, not a prayer for the deceased addressed to God. At this command, the dead man sat up and spoke (7:15). Just as sickness, the forces of nature, and Satan had submitted to Jesus' authority on so many other occasions, death now submitted, too.

Faith was not required of anyone for this miracle—no one had asked or expected Jesus to raise the young man—but the miracle inspired faith. Those who witnessed the dead man's restoration glorified God and hailed Jesus as a great prophet through whom God was acting (Luke 7:16).

A sign of the advent of the messianic age

The raising of the young man of Nain was a sign of the advent of the messianic age and pointed to Jesus as “the one who is to come” (Luke 7:19). This miraculous event anticipated Jesus' reply to the messengers sent by John the Baptist to inquire about his identity: “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them” (7:22; see also Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6). Jesus' miracle was prefigured in the Old Testament account of Elijah's restoring the son of the widow of Zarephath to life (1 Kings 17:17-24; see also Luke 4:26). Yet whereas Elijah was a great prophet who prayed to God to revive the child, Jesus restored the young man's life himself—because he is the Lord of creation, Author of life, and Messiah.

An epiphany of the glory of Jesus

Finally, the miracle in Nain points to Jesus' ultimate victory over death and is “an epiphany of the glory of Jesus that will be fully manifested in his own resurrection” (Rene Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles*). Jesus restored life to the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17), Lazarus (John 11:38-44), and Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25; Mark 5:35-42; Luke 8:49-55)—but that life, though renewed, was still mortal, and each of those people would die again. Jesus' own rising from the dead was a resurrection to true immortality. And in the final resurrection, when “this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54), we will live with him for all eternity.

[Jeanne Kun is a noted author and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. This article is excerpted from [Mighty in Power: The Miracles of Jesus](#) by Jeanne Kun (Copyright © 2004 by The Word Among Us Press). Used with permission. This book can be purchased from [The Word Among Us Press](#).]

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Pool of Nahal David at Ein Gedi, Israel - photo by Don Schwager

First Fruits of Pentecost - Shavuot:
linking the Jewish Feasts of Passover and Pentecost and seeing their fulfilment in
the Christian feasts

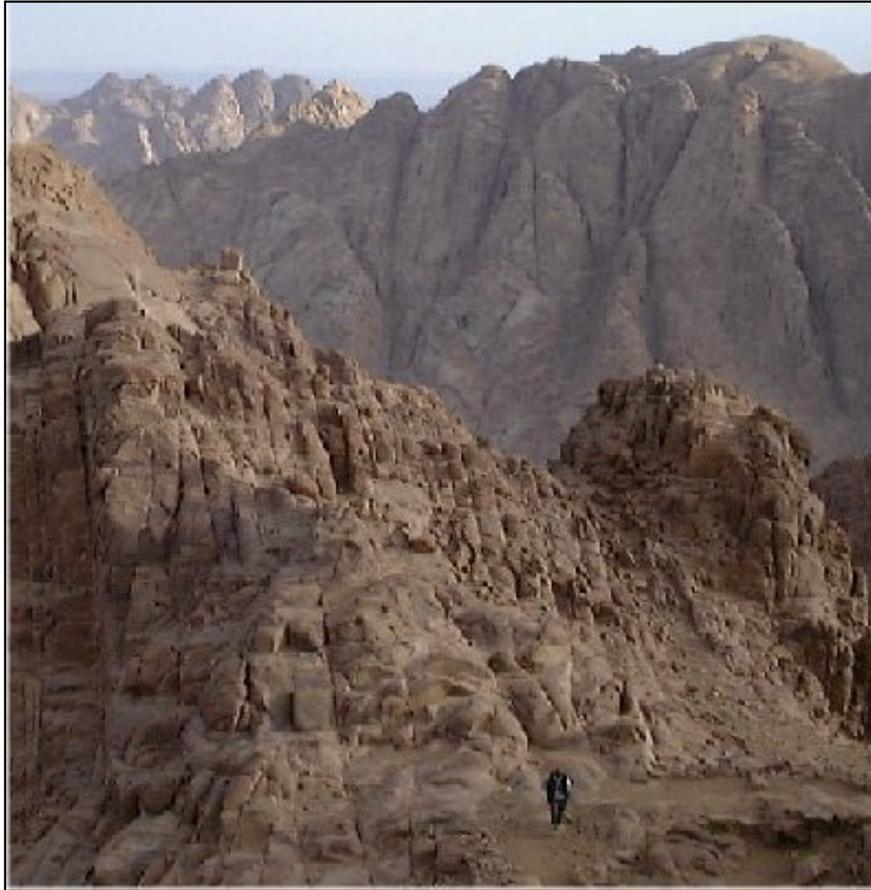
compiled by Don Schwager

Celebrating God's wonderful deeds

The Feast of Pentecost, called *Shavuot* in Hebrew, is one of the three major Jewish pilgrim festivals in the Old Testament, along with Passover and Sukkot. In Jesus' time, pilgrims from around the known world traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate this great feast. Pentecost, which literally means "fifty days", refers to the number of days

from the offering of the barley sheaf at the beginning of Passover. It is also called the "feast of Weeks", since the time elapsed from Passover was 7 weeks plus 1 day; the "Day of the First Fruits", when the first fruits of the spring harvest were offered in the temple; and the "Festival of the Giving of the Torah" (*Hag Matan Torateinu*). The celebration is described in the the Books of Exodus 23:14-17 and 28:26-31, Numbers 28:26-31, and Deuteronomy 16:9-12.

The Jewish Passover celebrated Israel's physical freedom from bondage in Egypt, and the giving of the Torah (the Ten Commandments) on Shavuot celebrates the spiritual freedom from bondage to idolatry and immorality. Shavuot is the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, where God made a covenant with his people and gave them a new way of life embodied in the 10 commandments. The Sadducees celebrated it on the 50th day from the first Sunday after Passover.



Mount Sinai, Egypt - photo by Don Schwager

The following Jewish prayer for this feast was comprised by an unknown author from the Middle Ages:

For the Feast of Weeks

I will always remember the wonderful deeds of the Lord
when Israel was in Sinai,
when Moses led the people out of Egypt into freedom.
They stood purified at the foot of the mountain
to receive your law, your holy law; which they swore to obey for ever.
and Israel was a holy nation in the midst of all the nations,
a holy thing and precious to the Lord.

High on the mountain your voice, Lord, was heard,

revealing great things:
and then the blind saw your light and the deaf heard your voice,
while the dumb opened their mouths to speak to you.

And then, O Lord, you revealed yourself
to those who had sought you and you said to them:
I am the rock, I am your shield and your defence, I am the only God.

You appeared in majesty, glory, and splendor,
to deliver your commandements.
And young and old alike were surrounded by the same glory
that surrounds you and your greatness.
And still today in my heart and soul and in my every thought
I bless the marvels and wonders that you, O Lord, perform.

When the days of Pentecost were fulfilled!

The Jewish Feasts of Passover and Pentecost are fulfilled in the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus.

Basil the Great, one of the early church fathers from the 4th century, describes how these feasts were fulfilled in the New Covenant established by Christ:

Pentecost is the culmination of the work of our salvation, that mighty plan of God's mercy which originated long ago when the Lord first began to form a people for himself. How many mysterious signs can be discovered in this feast which link the old dispensation with the new, teaching us that the law of Moses was the herald of the grace of Christ, in which it was to find its fulfillment!

Fifty days after the sacrifice of the lamb marking the deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptians, the law was given to the people of Israel on Sinai; and fifty days from the resurrection of Christ after his immolation as the true Lamb of God, the Holy Spirit came down upon the new Israel, the people who put their faith in Jesus. The same Holy Spirit was the author of both Old and New Testaments; the foundations of the gospel were laid with the establishment of the old covenant. What a wealth of meaning can be found, therefore, in the opening words of the second chapter of Acts, "When the days of Pentecost were fulfilled"!

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LIVING BULWARK sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission

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Charis Community hosted the recent [European Kairos Conference](#)

Charis Community - Belfast *A witness of God's grace for unity and reconciliation*

By Gary McFadden, Senior Coordinator

Belfast is known throughout the world for “the troubles”. For decades, Protestant-Catholic sectarian strife has plagued Northern Ireland, but during that time The Sword of the Spirit in the region has sustained [Charis](#), a community with people from both sides of the political and religious divide who are working to extend the way of peace in their own lives and to pass it on to others, especially the young. Personal conversion, cross-community activities, and taking concern for people on “the other side” characterize Charis.



Belfast train station, photo by Woytek

Can you describe the origins of Charis?

I would say that [Charis](#) grew out of the worldwide action of God to establish Christian community in a society that is increasingly fragmented and divided. Here in Northern Ireland, we heard the Lord's call to be an ecumenical witness as a community in a society riven by division between Christians and in the middle of a long period of religious and political violence.

For me that call came initially to a vibrant group called Gilnahirk Fellowship which grew initially out of a Presbyterian youth group and later became a large predominantly Protestant group called Community of the King.

In 1988 the Community of the King grew even larger when it was joined by Belfast Christian Family which was an ecumenical group comprising a Catholic charismatic prayer group and a House Church group. One of the leaders of this group was Des Dick, the current president of the European and Middle East Region of The Sword of the Spirit and also a coordinator of Charis Community. In 1976 Des had visited [The Servants of the Word](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA and was inspired by their ecumenical witness and vision for a common way of life.

In the early 1990s the Community of the King went through a period of trial and testing, along with a few other communities associated with [The Sword of the Spirit](#). When the community leadership could not agree on a way forward, the community lost many members. In 1995 some 30 former members of the Community of the King, made a commitment together to be a covenant community within the broader Sword of the Spirit network of communities. After a period of prayer and discernment, the community took the name Charis, which is the Greek New Testament word for grace.



University students in central Belfast, photo by Woytek

What enabled Charis to survive as a community in those days?

It is obvious to say that God called us together as an ecumenical Christian community and he wanted us not only to survive, but to grow again as well. I would say that two things he gave us were (and still are) vital.

Firstly, we had strong natural relationships. We got on very well together, I think that the call to live our lives together was strong. Many of us also were already living close to one another in a neighbourhood, which definitely helped.

Secondly was the support that we had from the Sword of the Spirit. We had a Servant of the Word house in Belfast all through this period. We derived great strength from this group of celibate men dedicated to the call and mission of The Sword of the Spirit. Indeed today, a large aspect of our community life revolves around the Servants of the

Word house, for meetings throughout the year and particularly the celebration the seasons during Advent and especially through Holy Week and Easter.

We were excellently served in our formation process by two leaders from the Sword of the Spirit, John Keating and Bruce Yocum. It was a great moment for Des Dick our first Senior Coordinator when, following a visitation led by David McGill, Charis was accepted as a fully-formed community at The Sword of the Spirit Assembly in London in May 2004.



Train overpass in Belfast, photo by Woytek

So how do things look today?

I would say healthy. We have over 90 people connected to us in various ways. Statistically we are about 80 per cent Catholic. We have over 30 people involved in our initiations process. Our young people are doing well, led by John and Debbie Byrne and with the Regional Youth Programme as a tremendous support and catalyst. Indeed many of us older ones marvel at how young the age profile is at our community gatherings.

Of course we have challenges—for example we are working hard at evangelistic outreach and praying for God's guidance and grace to make us fruitful.

We do above all recognise that whatever we have now or may have in the future is due to the grace which the Lord in his goodness has chosen to pour out on us.

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Minding the Gap in London: *speaking to university students about the person and work of Jesus Christ*

By Tadhg Lynch

Tadhg Lynch is a youth leader and member of [Nazareth Community](#) in Dublin, Ireland. For the past year he has served as a Gapper in a London based evangelistic training program sponsored by Kairos in Europe, an international youth outreach organization of The Sword of the Spirit. Tadhg shares his experience of front-line evangelism among university students in London.

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” - Isaiah 55:10-11

Pizza parties and friendship evangelism

Dave was the biggest guy at my tennis club. He was the same age as me, 6 feet and 7 inches tall, and seemed a good partner to attempt the boys' doubles championship with. We duly reached the final of the tournament in our first year as a team, but it was a disaster. Despite a good start, I couldn't contain my laughter at his attempts to smash the ball. He missed every time even though he was about twice as tall as everyone else on the court! We lost.

Over the next few years I grew to know Dave better. Dave was very typical of a young guy in Ireland – he was interested in sports, finishing his degree at college and watching football on the television. Although we went to different universities we met fairly regularly for coffee or a drink over the next few years. Our conversation generally revolved around life, ethics and moral questions. He knew I was “religious” and this interested him – more, I think, than he admitted to me – none of his other friends went to church or prayed regularly. Finally, after getting to know one another for about 4 years, he came to the youth meeting of the Nazareth community in Dublin. He arrived late and missed the prayer and talk but helped us eat the pizza. I always felt I had tried and failed with Dave, and now the opportunity was gone...

Missionary Gapper in London

Before I came to the GAP program in London the word evangelism scared me. I had images of prayer meetings upon the streets of Dublin with everyone I knew parading past while I tried desperately to play the right chords to the song “Arise Shine Out”. I knew that speaking to people about God was a task for every Christian, and so I used to “machine gun” my friends with gospel truths for two minutes, wait till they declined the invitation I offered and relax again, safe in the knowledge that my duty was done – at least for the next few weeks. My vision for working at evangelism in London was similar, but on a slightly different scale. Instead of being scared and hurried as I was when talking to my friends I would be fearless and bold, perhaps with a megaphone, safe in the knowledge that no one in their right mind would listen to invitations from a complete stranger. Particularly one with an Irish accent.

My job for the past year has been to speak to people in London about Jesus. In a city of eight million people this should not be a problem. London, however, is a place of extremes - 7, 999, 999 of those people stare assiduously at the pavement whenever they walk anywhere to avoid the other 1 as he bellows “don’t be a sinner, be a winner,” at them. Sometimes its hard to get people in London to even smile, let alone stop and have a chat with a stranger. Our mission in the student outreach is to offer to those who seek, a chance to discover the call God has on their lives and an environment in which to live it out. This has been a year of “waiting for the seekers” and also a year of “seeking them out.” We have met many people during the past nine months. We’ve spoken to many of them about the gospel, brought them to prayer meetings and introduced them to student Christian community.

A free cup of coffee and friendship in Christ

Some days evangelism seems remarkably easy, fulfilling and rewarding – sharing our testimony as we stir milk and sugar into the free coffee we offer people. Other days it’s a struggle to smile at them as we pass it out, but the Lord is accomplishing his purposes through the little we offer him. Our coffee stall on the University campus is one of the main ways in which we meet new people. We have “regulars” who come to us for a free drink. We have “friends” who come for a free drink but also seem to enjoy a chat and a chance to have a worthwhile conversation, and we have “seekers” who want to find out about our life and whom we invite into it. It has amazed me the amount of people who occupy the latter category. In a comparatively short time we have met many people who are happy to connect to our socials, sports events and meetings. Many of these people knew none of us before this year and many we would now count as friends.

Evangelism in London has not been about massive rallies or huge sign-up sheets. Rather it has been a slow process of building friendships with the people God sends us. Even in this the Lord has been surprising – some whom I felt sure would find a home with us have moved elsewhere quickly while others who are not even Christian have shown increasing desire to know about us and about our life. Building friendships has been the most rewarding part of this year – trying to speak to little more than strangers about Jesus is exhilarating – but constructing a friendship for the sole basis of speaking to someone about the gospel (and having them know it!) has changed my perspective on evangelism completely. Its not easy, but no longer is it terrifying. I have conviction that everything I say and do can be used for the Lord, rather than having to squeeze a testimony of my faith into 2 minute spells. God promises that His word “*will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*” This has been tremendously comforting to me over the past year. Some people I have spoken to refused a free cup of coffee, some have been baptised in the Spirit – God promises that neither word, when we speak it in his name, is wasted.

Life-giving Christian relationships

As you get on or off the train in the London tube stations, the PA system warns you to “mind the gap between the train and the platform.” Working in Koinonia this year has been an experience of “minding the gap” in the spiritual environment of London. Serving where the Lord has called us, building the mission through relationships, intercession, prayer and service. Living and constructing community life on campus in the heart of London is our mission this year. Learning to offer life-giving Christian relationships in every context is a task to continue wherever we live and whatever work we do.

When I go back to Dublin I’m going to look Dave up, take him out again and have a chat. He owes me a pizza...

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Painting With Light

the photographic art of capturing the beauty of God's creation

by Don Schwager



Ethiopean Copts at mid-day prayers - Church of the Holy Sepulchre - Jerusalem
photographic image converted to digital watercolor

This scene was photographed in the bright mid-day sun on the rooftop of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. I enhanced the colors and texture to reveal the inner radiance and beauty of this holy place, revered by many Christians as the place where Christ died and rose to new life from the tomb on the third day - just as he had prophesied.



Ben Nevis in the Highlands of Scotland



Blue boat by the Irish coast - near Connemara, Ireland



Climbing the hills of Glenariff along the North Antrim coast of Northern Ireland



Misty sunrise reflection - lake near Pinckney, Michigan, USA



Don't fall - Old Harry Cliffs along the Jurassic coastline of Western England

About the artist

Don Schwager is an artist photographer. He studied fine arts at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, DC (USA) and the School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (USA). He is a member of The Servants of the Word and currently resides in London, UK.

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