



imago

summer 2004 NEWSLETTER volume six issue two

It will be obvious to anyone who has even minimal acquaintance with the Christian tradition that spiritual life has found expression in both withdrawal from and engagement with the world around us. There has been much debate as to which is the better way. Are we best to withdraw from the world and give ourselves to cultivating a life of contemplation or to opt for the practice of engagement where we are actively involved in seeking to make the world a better place? Each has its appeal. And we may be wise to say that it need not be a case of one or the other. Many have written about the creative tension present in these two forces in human life. In a little book called *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity and Caring* – author Parker J. Palmer speaks of his own struggle to sort out which of these to be devoted to. After a long journey and much effort to cultivate the contemplative side of life, he concluded he was an activist at heart. Though recognizing the value of each, he adopted a model of contemplation-in-action.

The choice we make can serve either to bring us life or to take life from us. One needs only to note the frenzied pace of contemporary urban living and how it destroys our relationships and shrivels our inner life while activism for the sake of others can bring great satisfaction and meaning into our lives. Or observe how the turn inward to contemplation can either nurture and refresh the spirit or render us disconnected in our personal lives and oblivious to matters of justice and the challenge of making our world a better place.

When we hear talk of Christian piety we are more likely to think in terms of a turn inward than a turn outward – though piety can be found in both forms in the Christian tradition. I am following this line of thought as a way into the matter of how we look at



< “Phillip”, oil on canvass,
by Bernard Racicot, Montreal

Painting people

The human face is invariably a compelling subject matter for art. What we see in the human visage can generate a wide range of emotions, and open us to fresh understanding of ourselves and of others. Bernard Racicot works in downtown Montreal. He is part of *Innovation* an arts initiative under *Christian Direction* – an inner city urban ministry. Not a day goes by for this artist, without coming into contact with someone who is “down and out” on the street. He says that each day he tries to allow these people to speak to him, particularly to his heart. “When I sit down and listen to them, I am reminded of the fragile nature of our souls that God is seeking to protect and cherish.”

For about a year now, Bernard has been participating in an art therapy workshop for street people. The time spent with them is greatly valued, he paints his canvasses and works to help them with theirs. Many of these people he works with are stimulated in their creativity by this opportunity to paint and they are encouraged socially through doing these activities together.

Bernard is inwardly drawn to painting the people that he meets in his inner city work. He says that “watching them stops me from complaining about my own lot in life. I listen and I let God have His way in my heart through these individuals. Sometimes I meet them on the street, or... they may end up in my living room... on the wall.”

Here is art work engendered by human encounter, it is work that affirms the ‘other’ and speaks to the value of human relationships.

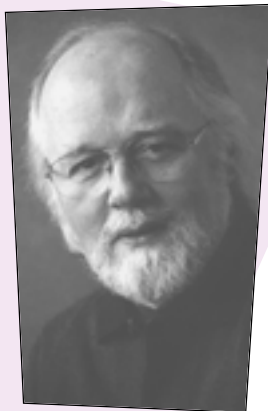
bracicot@direction.ca 

art. I want to suggest that there are some forms of aesthetic piety present in our culture? The term ‘piety’ here is to be taken in its general sense as “devotion”.

Those of a more modern persuasion will exercise their aesthetic piety in terms of contemplation. The work we find in museums, galleries, theaters and concert halls is there for us to contemplate.

We are to be moved by the beauty of what we see or hear. We are to be affirmed in our humanity and reminded again of how much we are capable of as human beings. It is a piety that cultivates a strong sense of the resourcefulness of our human community. A postmodern aesthetic piety is likely to find the devotee rejoicing in self-expression more interested in novelty than in beauty or

harmony, history or tradition. It is a piety that venerates uniqueness and is often characterized by discontent and prone to disconnect with the past while it champions



continued on page 4

News & Notes

■ *I was pleased to meet Canadian author Murray Pura at the Festival of Faith and Writing held in April at Calvin College. I knew of Murray and his work as a writer but we met for the first time at the Festival in Grand Rapids Michigan. Here he offers a sketch of his impressions of the Festival.*

It was my first Festival. Paraclete Publishing, based in Massachusetts, had hosted a fiction contest and I was one of five finalists. The winner was to be announced Saturday. So I went. It was a bit bewildering. Hundreds of people streamed back and forth, at any given moment anywhere from eight to a dozen different events were going on. The highlight of my first day was a drama about Edith Stein, a Jewish woman who had converted to Catholicism and taken the veil during the Third Reich, a woman who resisted the Nazis with her wit and intellect and prayers and who was gassed by them at Auschwitz. The second day, a talk on Flannery O'Connor was tops. The third, I delighted in Joyce Carol Oates' humour, two young novelists' transparency, and Frederick Buechner reading from his works. And Leif Enger, the novelist who judged the fiction contest, was dazzling. He topped me up with a sense of the enchantment of story once again. No, he didn't pick me as the winner, but he did pick me to get published, and in my world, that's a win by itself. I returned to Canada inspired to scribble, scribble, scribble, eh, Mr. Gibbon.

Murray Pura, Pincher Creek Alberta,
murlin@telusplanet.net

■ *Last summer Imago took the initiative to encourage some small groups to take on the challenge of reading Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts, edited by Jeremy Begbie. This small collection of essays looks at a number of the arts in the light of the Christian understanding of the incarnation. One of those groups came together in Cambridge Ontario and was led by Heidi Brannan who gives a brief report below.*

For some unearthly reason last fall I felt strongly impressed to host a "Beholding the Glory" study group. I had, as a matter of fact, been struggling to feel connected with other creators for some time. The gathering of interested participants for this study alone seemed to fuel a vision greater than that of eight weeks in this book.

A healthy mix of artists from different forms, each week we were to examine a new facet of the incarnation. Changing the rules some we included a bit of show and tell. For example, the week we were to look at incarnation through dance the dancers in the group would briefly share their vision and an appropriate piece of work. And so with the poets, writers, etc.

By the end of the study the common consensus was: "What can we do to grow a community wherein the Lord is free to express His heart in any creative language and where we are free to make mistakes releasing this expression?"

We took a break over Christmas and January then in February a new group gathered. This was to be a worship playground. Each one coming with whatever tools or toys they wanted.

We have been meeting monthly on different themes. It has not been a passive group, but one full of spontaneous risk and experiment. As a result we have been tangibly "Beholding the Glory" of our Lord.

For more info contact:
Heidi & Patrick Brannan (519)650-9817
stonemaiden@iglide.net

A new play based on the life of John the Baptist was performed at this summer's Toronto Fringe Festival.

A Voice of One Calling by Brian Wigg is a portrayal of the last hours of John and his struggle with the meaning of his ministry and with his own faith. Heralded from birth as the one to prepare the way for the Lord, and to turn the hearts of Israel back to the Lord, he carried out that calling with passion and with fire. In the culmination of his work he baptized Jesus, the one who would be Saviour. And in a moment of absolute glory, seeing heaven open and the spirit of God descending like a dove. Like Moses before him, he hears the voice of God from above, and is told that Jesus is the one. Yet it isn't long before he is thrown in prison, and wondering if Jesus is indeed the one or if Israel should expect someone else. John, arguably one of the greatest Jewish prophets, was not immune to the struggle for faith, and the crush of self doubt.

If you have interest in this work contact the actor/playwright Brian Wigg.
bwiggg@pobox.com

Nicoll, Catherine A. (C.M.) 1910-2004



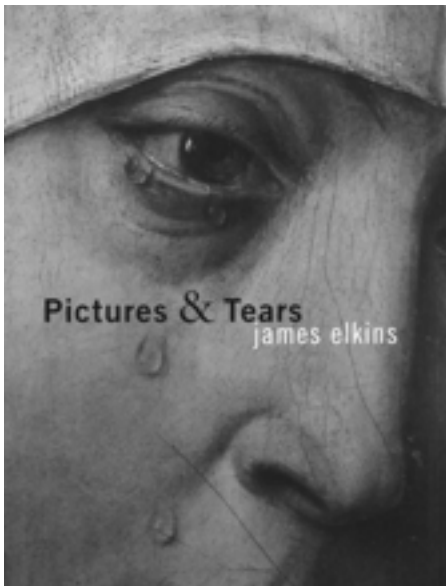
Many in the Imago circle of friends will have known Cathie Nicoll. She made a significant contribution to Inter-Varsity in Canada and to the lives of countless students over her years of service. The video of her life's work is available through Imago as noted below. She is fondly remembered by all who knew her.

Cathie Nicoll, or "Nicky", as she was known to thousands of students and friends from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, left us peacefully on May 3, 2004. Born of Scottish missionary parents in Chefoo, Shantung, China. In September of 1930, Noel Palmer, Inter-Varsity's first full-time General Secretary, hired a half-time secretary to assist him in the office for the grand sum of \$10 a week. And so, Cathie began her half-century of work with Inter-Varsity, a fledgling student mission.

Cathie was instrumental in beginning Inter-School Christian Fellowship, Varsity Christian Fellowship and Teachers' Christian Fellowship in Jamaica. As mentor and Bible teacher, she influenced a generation of students and campers. In 1987, her remarkable role among youth in Canada was recognized by the Rt. Hon. Jeanne Sauve when she received the Order of Canada. Her contribution to Inter-Varsity's work and her profoundly biblical leadership principles were demonstrated in the 1990 video "This May Be Your Life's Work". The title was taken from a quote from Noel Palmer when he realized that he had hired more than a secretary. This video is available from Imago for \$25. Call 416-421-8745, email shiedel@netcom.ca or write to Imago, 630 Indian Road, Toronto, ON M6P 2C6

Please tell of your memories of Cathie. You can email your message to: cathienicoll@ivcf.ca.

As a tribute, Inter-Varsity has established the Cathy Nicoll Memorial Fund for Leadership Development. Gifts may be made through our secure online donation page or sent to: Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada, 64 Prince Andrew Place, Toronto, Ontario M3C 2H4.



Pictures and Tears, by James Elkins, Routledge, 2001

James Elkins, who teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, takes up the topic of how pictures and for that matter any art can move us – even to tears. This historical overview of crying in the presence of art raises interesting questions about the place of the emotions in response to artistry as well as emotion as a resource for understanding art. Art work discussed ranges from Renaissance artist Dieric Bouts to Casper David Friedrich in the 19th century to the 20th century Rothko Chapel in Houston. The author acknowledges that he like most of his academic colleagues remains tearless when it comes to art – but openly explores this ‘resistance’ to tears. A fascinating read exploring how art this most expressive of human endeavours engages its audience and what place if any there is for tears. ❖

Disarmament, by John Terpstra



Canadian poet John Terpstra is by instinct a narrative poet, a writer whose diction is spare, colloquial, even conversational. And yet, as is the way with poetry, the words accrete meaning, add

up to more than the sum of the linguistic parts. So, too, with the emotional freight in these poems: each poem gathers slowly into a weightiness that leaves a lingering impression on the memory. A perfect example would be the title poem, “Disarmament,” which he has read at an Imago event. Here Terpstra creates several metaphor layers: not only the large political and ethical issues raised by war but more local conflicts in an apartment building. As the narrative builds, it is punctu-

ated by lines that crystallize all that has gone before: “Our lives run through our fingers like water.... The war is never elsewhere.” And the wrenching conclusion: “Come, love / Disarm us.” Terpstra’s poetry is wise without the slightest shred of self-consciousness; the wisdom present here comes through experience; it is not proclaimed, but lived in and through language. This is a poet you will not so much want to read as dwell with. By the way, this book is published by Gaspereau Press, a wonderful literary publisher based in Nova Scotia. In an age of computer screens and cheap paper, it’s sheer sensual pleasure to experience the way Gaspereau presents *Disarmament*. From the texture of the paper to the beauty of the typeface to the final colophon, this is the medium in which word and reader should meet.

Adapted from *Image Update*. ❖

Spirit Moves – An imago project

Excerpts from a review by Chris MacIntosh.

I am not a very big fan of what is commonly called worship & praise music.

There are of course a few

notable exceptions such as David Fitzgerald, Kemper Crabb and now you can add Fergus Marsh to that list. For those unfamiliar with Mr. Marsh, let me drop a few names. He has played bass guitar and Chapman Stick for the likes of Mark Heard, Bruce Cockburn and Steve Bell. This release is on Bell’s label, “Signpost Music”.

Musically the album would fall into an electric groove/ world music feel that just carries you along on a wave of exquisite sounds. The combination of Fergus on the Chapman Stick, his brother Hugh on electric violin and various percussion players make for one incredibly strong project. The vocals are supplied by different artists, the only one that I was familiar with was Steve Bell, but I definitely need to check these other folks out. They are all top notch singers who I can only hope have recorded other material. With the exception of “Psalm 63” by Rachel Brooks, all of the tunes are original compositions written by Fergus with assistance on lyrics on one tune from Lynn Marsh.

This is just a great, great album.

To get a copy or find out more, email: fergus@bellnet.ca

Imago Presence at Global Arts Conversation

The Lausanne Congress first met in Lausanne Switzerland in 1974. Its purpose was to explore issues related to the church and global evangelization. There have been many subsequent global gatherings organized by Lausanne. This year Lausanne celebrates its 30th anniversary and the meetings of what is now called the Lausanne Forum will take place in Thailand, September 29 to October 5, 2005.

At these meetings there is a cluster of 31 groups on a wide variety of topics that meet to consider their particular theme in relation to the overall theme of global evangelism. For the first time Lausanne is including a group on the arts. Phyllis Novak (Sketch), James Tughan (Semaphore Institute) and Imago’s Executive Director have been invited to be part of this global conversation.

Based on a paper submitted back in March we have been asked to host the global internet conversation for the delegates in the arts track as well as be joint hosts for the Thailand discussions.

This is a unique opportunity and it offers great promise for fruitful dialogue that can serve to influence the role of the arts as a presence in Christian faith communities and a bridge to conversation with those located in other social, cultural or religious settings.

Both Phyllis and James have experience as project co-ordinators under Imago and so together we will be an Imago-Canadian presence at this international table. If you wish to see the “working document” that we submitted it is available at our website (www.imago-arts.on.ca). To find out about Lausanne see: www.lausanne.org ❖

Upcoming Events

Space & Spirit

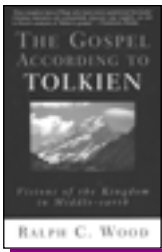
The Centre Art Gallery at Calvin College is seeking submissions that explore the idea of Sacred Place. The deadline for Entries is August 16, 2004. Artists may submit up to 3 entries of 2-D or 3-D using slides or a video for installation work. Artwork must be original and have been produce since 2002. The fee is \$10 for each entry. Mail entries to: Space and Spirit, Centre Art Gallery, Calvin College, 3201 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546. For more information contact Jo-Ann VanReeuwijk at: Jpv2@clavin.edu

Fresh Waters

A Juried Art Exhibit celebrating the 25th anniversary of The King's University College, Edmonton, runs from October 16 to November 19, 2004. All media will be considered. Two dimensional work not to exceed 72" x 72". Artists may enter up to 3 works, either by slide, JPEG digital images or print images. September 10, 2004 is the postmarked submission deadline for entries. Send entries to: Fresh Waters Exhibition, The Kings University College, 9125-50 Street, Edmonton, AB T6B 2H3. For more information contact Daniel vanHeyst at 780-465-3500 x8020 or daniel.vanheyst@kingsu.ca

Talk Film, Talk Faith

August 27 to 30, 2004. A 3-day Workshop during the Montreal World Film Festival. VIEW the first six films of the of the Festival's Official Competition. HEAR James M. Wall of the *Christian Century*. MEET the 2004 Ecumenical Jury. JOIN stimulating discussions of film and Christian faith. The programme and schedule are at: www.direction.ca/annonces/TheChallenge.pdf Organized by Christian Direction and the Presbyterian College of McGill University. For information contact Jenna Smith at Christian Direction, 1450 City Councillors St., Suite 720, Montréal (Québec) H3A 2E6. Phone: 514-878-3035. Email: innovation@direction.ca



The Spiritual World of J.R.R. Tolkien

September 17 & 18, 2004

with **Ralph Wood**, Professor of Literature at Baylor University, author of *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth*.

Public lecture – *Tolkien and Lewis: Friends and Combatants*

Friday September 17, 8:00 p.m., Cameron Hall, Yorkminster Baptist Church (Yonge and Heath, one block north of St. Clair). Reception to follow.

The Story in the Story: The Gospel According to Tolkien

Saturday September 18, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Good Shepherd Community Church, 390 Bamburgh Circle (one block south of Steeles Ave on Warden Ave.).

This event will include an informal talk by Professor Wood and conversation together about key themes in *The Lord of the Rings*. Cost \$10 (pay at the door).

Erica Grimm-Vance, Halle Berry & Catwoman

The work of Vancouver artist Erica Grimm-Vance (who won first prize in the imago competition) has made its way into a the newly released blockbuster film *Catwoman*. The Patience Phillips character, who is Catwoman, is a graphic designer by profession and a painter by nature. Three paintings and a 50 page book of sketches were done for the film. Erica coached Halle Berry on how to paint. It is an innovative way to get your work to a broader audience. Though we can't vouch for the quality of the film we can assure you the artwork is good. For more go to: www.imago-arts.on.ca 📄

It will be obvious *continued from page 1*

individual expression and even shock value.

Now it seems to me there is a third way, a perspective which attends to the value of art as a resource for transforming the world: art with a social conscience, creativity that addresses important humanitarian and social issues in a world gone awry. Believing that art is capable of helping us see more clearly and understand more fully, can we also say that art has the power to move us to act more humanely? Art can call to account a domesticated vision of the world that simply protects the *status quo* or it can offer an alternate vision that contributes to making a better world.

Much of Christian piety has been of the other worldly sort, taking us out of the challenging and difficult realities found in

the circumstances of our lives. Art done by Christians has commonly followed that spiritual model and been disconnected from the gritty reality of ordinary life. The social malaise that confronts us at every turn has been ignored in such artistry, while the 'faithful' cultivate their inner life all the time marching with the masses to the tune of a consumerist culture.

I have no quarrel with the idea that art is something to be contemplated nor do I want to say that self-expression is always a problem. However I wonder how artistry might move us down a path of social concern. I am asking how the creative gift expressed in drama, dance, poetry, visual art or music might turn us to some of the deep concerns of our troubled world in such a way that we are moved to make a difference. Let me be clear, I have no wish to set

an agenda for artists – to say what they should or must do. I am only asking about what art may be capable of doing. Matters of social concern are not to be mere appendages stuck on to artistic expression, nor ought they to be issues imposed on the artist from outside. Art communicates and artists have something to say. I am wondering about what is often referred to as the prophetic role of the arts. I don't see much of that and I wonder why.

John Franklin, Executive Director
133 Southvale Drive, Toronto, ON M4G 1G6
416-421-8745 franklin@ultratech.net
www.imago-arts.on.ca