

Friday Night Theology, 29th May 2009.

Working on a Dream

Britain's got talent. Plenty of it. Each night this week a colourful array of singers, dancers, escapologists, DJs, comics, and musicians have graced the airwaves. "We're chasing the dream", said the spokesperson for Flawless, the dance troupe whose performance was imaginative, genial and, well, flawless. The show's producers ascribe its overwhelming success to the public's longing for a [feel-good factor in bleak times](#).

In a similar vein, Bruce Springsteen reflected on the success of his latest album 'Working on a Dream'. The Boss said that in a time of moral, spiritual and economic collapse, people turn to storytellers: to rock bands, authors, poets and filmmakers. People who work on a dream.

"Though trouble can feel like it's here to stay, I'm working on a dream.

I straighten my back and I'm working on a dream.

Though sometimes it feels so far away, I'm working on a dream

And how it will be mine someday."

However, storytellers are not merely found among the artisans. They are also among teachers, entrepreneurs, politicians, medics, pensioners and preachers.

Bishop Graham Cray in his book [Disciples and Citizens](#) writes:

"Jesus was a story teller. He taught in parables. Many of the parables retold Israel's story in ways that seemed familiar when they began, but brought the listener to a conclusion they did not expect...The purpose of parables was to convey a fresh possibility to the hearer, otherwise unknown to this world or his language.... God's power was as much in action in the telling of parables as in the healing of the sick. In the parables, the kingdom demands a response. They are a call to discipleship. This was subversive engagement with Israel's understanding of its story. We need to find similar, imaginative ways to retell, subvert and challenge our nation's stories."

Culture tells various stories. The global market culture even has a 'master narrative,' as Harvey Cox reflects in the *Globalization of Pentecostalism*, a story about the origin and course of human enterprise, a 'plan of salvation' and understanding of 'progress'. Our culture's narrative of happiness, though, no longer has its home in religion. Rather as David Naugle writes in [Reordered Love, Reordered Lives](#), "Happiness is now a person-relative concept, often associated with individual choice, agreeable circumstances, and pleasure-giving experiences....catering to feelings and the flesh, even if such a basic pattern of life is punctuated by an occasional generous or selfless act."

Faith and culture have an integral relationship. We can develop a critical theology of culture and subvert the nation's story of culture by offering an alternative. How refreshing to listen to the [entrepreneurs](#) in last week's *Songs of Praise*. Enterprise used to alleviate poverty. These stories flow from a different 'master narrative,' a pursuit of happiness that has its home in faith and virtue and is concerned with the wellbeing of the wider community. Such stewardship promotes life and recovers the intended *shalom*.

Britain's got talent. The church is full of imaginative stories that subvert the dominant social reality and help us to dream again. The role of the church is to tell the story of Christ. Whatever our vocation, let's tell that story well and convey a fresh possibility of the meaning of 'prosperity,' 'progress,' 'happiness'.

The shared dream is God's kingdom – its joy, peace and righteousness. That is something to live for, work at, dream of, chase after and wax lyrical about.

So, let's work on a dream today. And how it will be ours someday.

Marijke Hoek, Coordinator Forum for Change

CULTURE-FOOTPRINT

The Forum for Change initiative brings together Christians who are working in the arts, politics, media, education and business. It's a place to tackle the issues involved in living a transformational Christian life.

The Forum publishes a monthly Culture Footprint, featuring an individual who is living out their faith in a secular context. Its sometimes funny, always interesting and often challenging. To get the Culture Footprint delivered to your inbox click on [Culture Footprint](#) and register online.