

A Christian response to the marginalised

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God opposes marginalisation. His being demonstrates this. God is one in three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Even within diversity, this Trinitarian community reflects the absolute inclusion of the other. Our community will ideally reflect God's character. This is because the bible says that we are made in the image of God. Therefore, while there may be diversity in our community, there must also be unity.

The Garden of Eden was characterised by diverse identities in unity through mutual service that resulted in mutual blessing. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God (The Fall), they blamed one-another, hid from God and were in conflict with the earth. There began a constant struggle between these identities. As each struggles for survival and supremacy, even at the expense of the other, marginalisation results. Even those who don't particularly seem to be marginalised are at least marginalised from the loving fellowship and salvation of God. All cultures need redemption.

However, where marginalisation occurs, God uses it for his glory. For example, the inclusion of women such as Tamar, Rahab and Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1:1-17 highlights how God uses the marginalised or outcasts to bring about his purposes. Jesus himself was considered an outcast. His crucifixion outside of Jerusalem is the way God wins the world back to himself. God uses the outcast and the marginalised to win our healing and salvation (see Hebrews 13:12).

Two current theories about community will help us understand the concept of marginalisation. On the one hand, Thomas Hobbes championed unity, where the individual sacrifices personal freedom for a sovereign and works together like a body. Anyone with a different vision is marginalised. This theory is realised every time one people- group oppose the interests of another. On the other hand, Rousseau theorised diversity, where the personal freedom of the individual is primary. Anyone who is particularly vulnerable and who might rely on the care of others will likely be marginalised. The contemporary expression of Rousseau's individualism is Margaret Thatcher's (early 1990s) famous quote "there is no such thing as society".

Marginalisation creates cultural difference. This creates barriers – for example, between Team and Companions. Both groups need to respect each other and neither should expect the other to be exactly like them. Notice, we use the word "Companions"? This is because its literal meaning is 'one we break bread with'. It is this 'breaking of bread' – or hospitality - that overcomes marginalisation. This is the "food for the day" aspect of Bread of Life.

Hospitality transcends cultural differences and allows the coming together of two groups of people. During Bread of Life, the St Michael's Hall provides a neutral place where people from different cultures can meet in a controlled environment for a limited time. Here, while being unified by the act of eating, we engage. It has been our experience that this moment provides an opportunity to help a Companion build family, community and a glimpse of the city to come.

The friendships formed over breakfast are a reflection of another table. This table is that of Jesus who broke bread with his disciples and passed it to them and said, 'Take! Eat! This is my body.' Whether Team or Companions we share the need for God's mercy and forgiveness in Christ (Rom 3:23). Ultimately, the Bible describes only one form of marginalisation – those who don't know God through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This difference is eternal and far more important than difference created by culture. This is the "food of eternity" aspect of Bread of Life.