CROWN OF THORNS

ANCIENT PROPHECY AND THE (POST)MODERN SPECTACLE

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This article juxtaposes actress Rachel Griffiths' 'art installation, one-woman protest' at Crown Casino, Melbourne, in 1997, with Jesus of Nazareth's 'provocative one-man street theatre' in the Jerusalem temple reported in the biblical Gospels (Mark 11:15-19 and parallels). I consider that Griffiths' casino-action echoes the style and content of the ancient prophetic symbolic actions (sign-acts) in the Bible. The juxtaposition is therefore undertaken as a means of apprehending in the (post)modern world the radical nature of ancient prophetic symbolic actions, such as Jesus' temple-action. I suggest that the affronting and offensive style and content of such actions may generate an 'alienation-effect' (Brecht) provoking critical engagement with a commonly assumed reality. And in the 'society of spectacle' (Debord), in which a revolution against the spectacle can only take the form of spectacle (Baudrillard), the appropriation of powerful images from the Bible may introduce an alternative reality.

In the beginning was the performance; not the word alone, not the deed alone, but both, each indelibly marked with the other forever (Crossan 1991 p. xi).

Figure 1 Rachel Griffiths arrested at Crown Casino
The Photograph by Samb Brown
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The greatest tragedy in theology in the past three centuries has been the divorce of the theologian from the poet, the dancer, the musician, the painter, the dramatist, the actress, the movie-maker (MD Chenu, cited in Fox 1983 p. 180).

CROWN OF THORNS

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA: 8 MAY 1997

Under the sign of 'Planet Hollywood' a fantastically decorated woman, her body painted white and sprinkled with glitter, emerges defiantly from a white stretch-limousine, a dramatic, blood-stained crown of thorns encircling her head.[1]

In her arms a young girl dressed as an angel begins tossing coins upon the ground.

The woman unfurls a banner emblazoned with the face of a sorrowful man, exposing her bare breasts and revealing that she is wearing only a loin cloth.

As many of the crowd of over two thousand applaud the daring spectacle, she chants her protests while the child runs after the coins until police and casino security attempt a 'cover up' – of her breasts and the spectacle!

After about ten minutes the woman, her lawyer and her young companion are whisked from public view by security guards. Held for nearly half an hour but not charged, they are unceremoniously evicted through the back door.

On this night of nights a Who's Who of Melbourne's glitterati had gathered for the gala opening of the new $2 billion Crown Casino:

> Melbourne ground to a screaming halt on the night the permanent Casino opened. Melbourne's media, entertainment and social set turned out in full force – even previous skeptics were determined not to miss a berth. It was *the* event to be seen at, and to be seen to be talking about. Sydney television programs hosted special editions in Melbourne that day; news stations interrupted regular programming to post special bulletins ('five hours till opening time…') and chat shows and talkback radio were abuzz (Costello and Campbell 1997, p. 267).

While the glitterati strutted their stuff inside, spectators outside the venue had been party to an extraordinary, eye-catching performance; albeit, a cameo role. The *dramatis personae* of the performance were local actress Rachel Griffiths (b. 1968), who had burst onto the international film scene starring in the Australian movie *Muriel's Wedding*, and child actress Melissa, then acting as a stand-in with Griffiths in the movie *Amy*. Griffiths would be nominated for an Oscar in 1999 but this was a performance of an entirely different nature. Together Rachel and Melissa had gone into competition with the gala opening in spectacular style. But as the actress herself asked rhetorically, 'What drives a girl to wake up in the morning and say to herself, I am going to dress as Jesus Christ and run half-naked through the social event of the year?' (Griffiths 1997b p. 11).

Those who heard her cries above the crowd or caught a glimpse of her 'Need not greed' banner knew why. As did those who received a copy of her press release:

> With no expense spared, nor detail overlooked, let's take a look at our defining symbol of Melbourne.

Fountains, laser lights, and twinkling chandeliers… while we close Fairfield Hospital and let AIDS and Hep C run rampant amongst the most helpless members of our city community.

Imported gold leaf and polished brass fittings… whilst we remove local councils and close high schools and hospitals.

Walls panelled in rosewood, and toilet fittings plated in gold… whilst we hold a desperate charity auction of public assets, selling off our public utilities under a suspicious veil of economic rationalism.

2500 Poker machines, a 26 metre video screen and the city's first hot pink lounge bar… whilst 50 percent of the problem gamblers in Victoria earn less than $20,000 (Griffiths 1997a).

On 18 May Rachel Griffiths joined prominent Melbournian musicians, comedians, writers, and leaders from the churches and local government, together with a crowd of three thousand, at the 'Not the Casino Party'. It had as its theme: 'Come celebrate – Don't gamble Melbourne's soul'. Addressing the crowd on the banks of the Yarra River opposite the casino, the actress outlined her position. She targeted then Victorian state premier Jeff Kennett who had earlier branded opponents of the casino 'unVictorian'. Griffiths rejected the 'New charter of values' which she believed to be operating under the Kennett-led government. In what Paul Tankard (1997) aptly described as 'a splendid piece of oratory' (p. 15), she concluded: 'It now seems that to have an informed moral or philosophical opinion is unVictorian. To reject the mass promotion of a new culture of greed is unVictorian… To dream of politicians being poets and prophets instead of profiteers is unVictorian' (Ashby 1997 p. 3).
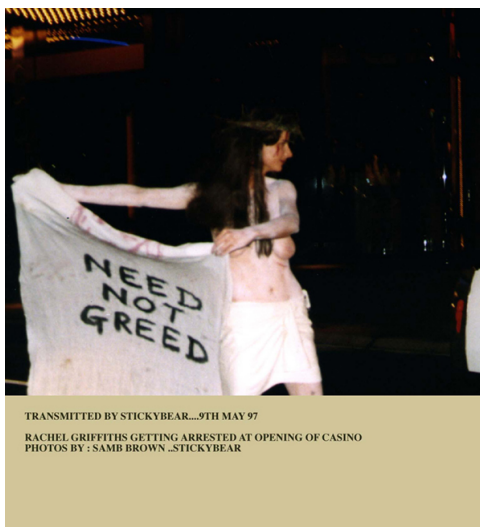
Figure 2 Rachel Griffiths protesting at Crown Casino
The Photograph by Samb Brown
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ART INSTALLATION, ONE-WOMAN PROTEST

'Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong', philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984 p. 76) concluded in *The Postmodern Condition*. The unusual symbolism in Rachel Griffiths' performance was eclectic: a collage or (in postmodern speak) a pastiche of ancient and medieval models. Pastiching is a common feature of postmodern novels where authors 'borrow the clothes of different forms (for example: the western, the sci-fi yarn and the detective tale)' (Lewis 1998 pp. 125-126). Frederic Jameson (1984) has caustically referred to pastiche as 'the random cannabilisation of all the styles of the past' (pp. 65-66). Yet, despite 'this cross-dressing' (Lewis 1998 p. 126), as Harvey Cox (1969) said of the controversial religious art of Sister Corita Kent in the 1960s, 'the resulting collage is a frisky caper with serious intent: we are made to see things in a new way' (p. 143). Griffiths' models for the 'caper' were the anti-tax protest attributed in English folklore to Lady Godiva, and the torture and humiliation of Jesus of Nazareth recorded in the Bible. She has told me, 'I like the idea of appropriating powerful images from history to make a point. I strongly believe in resonance. Also let's remember that the Godiva protest worked and was remembered' (Griffiths 2002).

When in 1998, while appearing on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation TV program *Express*, Griffiths was quizzed by journalist Madeleine Swain (1998) regarding the form of her protest, she commented that, 'I was looking at metaphors because I wanted to make a protest as an artist'. At the time she had described it as an 'art installation, one-woman protest' (cited in Button 1997). Installation art developed in the late 1960s and was concerned with the context in which works of art are displayed and aimed at drawing attention to hidden agendas, ideologies and political interests. Gallery sponsors, museum trustees and corporate patrons were the frequent targets of artists such as Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, and Hans Haacke. Griffiths' casino-action was installation art in terms of her attempted embodiment of the ideological interests she perceived the casino as representing: 'a "cash driven society" where only economic values count' (cited in Button 1997).

Opponents of the Crown Casino with its 350 gaming tables – a world record – and 2500 gaming machines, argued that the Victorian government's dependence upon income ultimately derived from gambling also committed it to the promotion of gambling. For Baptist minister Tim Costello and journalist Royce Millar 'The Crown Affair' (McKay 1999) was the story of a government 'being transformed into a casino spruiker…' (Costello and Millar 2000 p. 198). Summing up her position, Griffiths observed that 'gambling is being sold like candy. I think that is just really disturbing' (cited in Swain 1998). An episode of the 1990s cult TV sitcom *The Simpsons* entitled '$pringfield (or, How I learned to stop worrying and love legalised gambling)', which also inspired the protest, features the development of a casino in the Simpson's hometown of Springfield accompanied by a barrage of casino advertising. Virtual character Marge Simpson abandons her baby Maggie for hours while she is gambling (Groening 1993). Griffiths laughed: 'Its hilarious. It's exactly Melbourne today' (cited in Button 1997).

Drawing public attention to her viewpoint would not be easy. Premier Kennett was riding a wave of public support and the casino represented a key platform in his plans for rebuilding the state's depressed economy. Griffiths said she was determined to issue a challenge at the casino

opening. 'I'm going to have to do something insider, I'm going to have to get in here' (cited in Swain 1998). But she was to discover that there were two specific problems which made a protest at the opening gala difficult. Firstly, although a newfound celebrity herself, Griffiths had not been invited and her request for an invitation was refused. Secondly, changes in zoning around the casino area and new by-laws had made it illegal to protest using a banner within 500 metres of the complex. She recalled that 'that really incensed me' (cited in Swain 1998). The obstacles were to prove the catalysts for her employment of the Lady Godiva/Christ imagery in her casino-action: 'To communicate my message before I was arrested meant I had to use some pretty iconic imagery' (Griffiths 2002). According to folklore the Anglo-Saxon noblewoman Godiva, whom Griffiths termed 'a political activist' (cited in Button 1997), determined to ride naked on a white horse through the village of Coventry. Lady Godiva was a genuine historical figure, but the earliest written account of the ride was told more than a century later in *Flores historiarum* by Roger of Wendover (d. 1236). Retold numerous times and subjected to sentimentalising and eroticising embellishments, it has often captured the artistic imagination. In the late twentieth-century Godiva's white horse had to become a white stretch-limousine. After she was refused an invitation Griffiths

> thought, 'Okay, I've just got to turn up in a really big limo, because money seems to speak to these guys, so if I turn up in the biggest limo I can find, I can get inside, no questions asked'.

> Then I started to think, 'well, what can I do once I'm out of the limo that will get any attention?' And so then I thought, 'naked is good' and I did remember Lady Godiva, that's where it first came from, Lady Godiva riding naked through the streets of London, I think it was…

> And she was protesting against the poll tax (cited in Swain 1998).

WHOREHOUSE

Roger of Wendover attributed the motivation for Lady Godiva's economic concerns to her religious convictions. Rachel Griffiths (1997b) also refused to leave values out of the economic equation:

> Where is the care for spiritual, ethical and philosophical values in economic arguments? Where are the advertisements that show a wife going home from a night on the chips to tell her family that she has blown their lives? Where are the images of men jumping off bridges, businesses closing, savings eroded, pensions squandered? (p. 11).

She speaks as if a quasi-messianic status was being imparted to the casino itself in the language of its supporters. 'I was angry', she says, 'that the city I love was being brought down to the whorehouse and told to worship' (Griffiths 2002). In this respect at least, she was to conclude that her protest may have helped in part to increase public awareness of gambling issues in general and concerns about Crown Casino in particular: 'Well, I think it's all there. When I did it, it wasn't there, it was just front page after front page of "Oh glorious Crown, you're going to save us all and we love you so much and thank God we don't have God any more because we have Crown"' (Swain 1998).

Although guided by altruistic convictions rather than formal religious affiliation, she endowed her casino-action with spiritual dimensions by drawing upon spiritual figures as models, and by employing the words of the Dalai Lama in her press release. As her uncle, Melbourne Jesuit theologian Andrew Hamilton (1997), commented: 'Rachel's protest is significant because of its spontaneous religious imagery – prophetic gesture of nakedness and crown of thorns...' (p. 28). In *Carnal Knowing* Margaret Miles (1989 p. xii) traces the use of nudity as a symbolic imitation of Christ back to the medieval monk Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). And in *The Crucified God* Jürgen Moltmann (1974) draws attention to how medieval people often found solace in the 'man of sorrows' (Isaiah 53:3) widely depicted in the paintings of Fra Angelico, Hans Memling, Petrus Christus, Albrecht Dürer and Caravaggio, to name but a few. 'In the later Middle Ages', Moltmann wrote,

> the Christian people of Europe were seized by this devotion to the passion. The Byzantine portraits of Christ, the divine lord of heaven, and the imperial images of Christ, the judge of the world, were supplemented in churches by images of the crucified Christ of the poor, in which no realistic detail of pain and torture was omitted (p. 46).

Perhaps just in case there should be any mistaking this pretty iconic imagery, Griffiths had emblazoned her banner with the 'man of sorrows' in the form of the Shroud of Turin. This celebrated Catholic relic bears the image of a crucified man who evidently either is or is intended to be Jesus of Nazareth. Although carbon dating tests in the late 1980s contested its historical authenticity, it remains a powerfully evocative image of the suffering the biblical Gospels describe. So the image of a naked Jesus bearing a crown of thorns (Mark 15:17 and parallels) provided Griffiths with a means of embodying and emblazoning her critique of the economic and social suffering associated with 'problem gambling'. The Crown Entertainment Complex (that is, casino) would be portrayed as a crown of thorns – a source of suffering. Griffiths recalled:

> So naked women on horses, white horses, white limos you know that's a metaphor that's obviously potent for our feminist history. So I thought, 'yeah that's good', then I started to think, 'Crown, Lady Godiva, Crown', and then I started thinking, 'Jesus Christ' and I'd had conversations with my uncle who's a Jesuit, about the church and the position on gambling.

> That made me think – and I am Catholic, I have been a Catholic – of Christ. And then I thought, 'girl Christ, that's good, girl Christ is good. Half naked girl Christ, that's very good, we're getting somewhere'. Thinking, 'Crown of thorns, half naked, tits, crown of thorns. It's all coming together, the white limo, the Lady Godiva', so I thought, 'there is my essential image'. And then this little girl wanted to do it as well so I had the girl and she was an angel and that was that (Swain 1998).

While introducing Griffiths to the crowd at the Not the Casino Party, Tim Costello reminded those who may have taken offence at the manner of her protest that the Bible records the public performance of similar actions by Israelite prophets.[2] Indeed, Andrew Hamilton (1997) asserted – rightly in my judgement – that:

> The protest echoed precisely the style and the content of the prophetic tradition which has nourished Western political ideals. The prophets of Israel were driven by God to make *affronting and offensive gestures* in order to show how precarious and empty was an apparently prosperous order... The prophets attacked an apparently rational economic order that was built upon the acceptance of human suffering. Any God believed to approve of such a society was an idol (p. 28, my emphasis).

STATE OF CATHARSIS

'A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognise its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar... The new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them from our grasp today' (Willett 1964 p. 192), Marxist dramatist Bertolt Brecht wrote of his strategy of 'alienation-effect' (German *Verfremdungseffekt*). Brecht believed the conventional 'dramatic theatre' of 1920s Germany led the spectator to identify totally and uncritically with the hero, rendering the audience into a state of catharsis: a 'credulous hypnotised mass' (Sherwood 1996 p. 105). Brecht's own plays, in contradistinction, were intended to provoke the audience not just into critical thinking about the play, but into social action. A principal theoretician of the theatre between the two World Wars, Brecht's approach was 'disputatious drama' (German *dialektische Dramatik*: Knopf 1980 p. 380). Brechtian epic theatre employed bold and direct language and focussed on realistic scenes and often cruel action. Actors frequently addressed the audience directly or used song or even explanatory cardboard placards to introduce scenes. For Brecht, as Sherwood (1996) says, defamiliarisation 'is a political tool' (p. 106) not simply a form of entertainment. Ultimately, he wanted the audience to act to challenge ideologies and to reform society. With the A-effect, Brecht intended to produce critical engagement: 'the spectator must come to grips with things' (Sherwood 1996 p. 106). He wanted to break down the distinction between life and theatre.

Brecht's alienation-effect was compared to the effect of the parables of Jesus by David Buttrick (1994 p. 90). The analogy is equally applicable to prophetic symbolic action which biblical scholars often liken to 'street theatre' or 'acted parable'.[3] But Sherwood (1996) likens the prophetic symbolic action in Hosea 1-3 and its disturbing 'sign-language' to Brechtian theatre (pp. 116-120). Brecht himself once told a German newspaper when asked which book had made the strongest impression upon him: 'You're going to laugh: the Bible' (German *Sie werden lachen: die Bibel*: cited in Boer 2000). He often used language and images from the Bible or the history of Christianity. In particular, Brecht drew upon themes from the passion and death of Jesus as 'gestural content'. But 'biblical themes in Brecht's work are estranged or distanced (*verfremdet*) to allow the recipient to see a familiar situation in a new, different light' (von Bawey 1985 p. 196).

ASSUMED REALITY

'Traditionally, prophetic criticism has drawn on the language of Romanticism, rhetoric, gentle-manliness (and cleanliness); it has focussed on eschatology, transcendence and the individual prophetic heart. But prophecy is also a crudely embodied discourse...' (Sherwood 1998 p. 183, cf pp. 192-197). In performing their symbolic actions, the prophets went about naked, baked

on dung, married a whore, tore cloaks, wore yokes and iron horns, broke clay pots, shaved with swords, and gave their children bizarre names. Jesus of Nazareth ate meals with tax collectors and prostitutes; he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey; he overturned the tables of money-changers and he drove out buyers and sellers in the temple with a whip. The 'street theatre' analogy, therefore, risks diminishing the affronting and offensive nature of the actions. Sherwood (1998) captures my misgivings – and expresses them more memorably – when she writes that street-theatre is 'a word which to me, at least, suggests something light and touristy, like puppet shows or juggling at Covent Garden…' (p. 209). In his foreword to *The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context*, Walter Brueggemann (2000) identifies street theatre as an act of public theology: 'acting out in public before an unpersuaded constituency a truth about Jesus that is counter to commonly assumed reality' (p. xiv). This is, he says, 'neither wacko nuttiness nor exhibitionism; it is the joining of a contest in which the unexamined conventions of dominant society do not go uncontested and prevail by default' (p. xiii).

'I have always liked the story of Christ going nuts in the synagogue [read temple]', Rachel Griffiths (2002) has told me,

> and I strongly believe that Crown was being pushed as a new civic meeting place, the new spiritual home of Victorians. The Lady Godiva combination went well cause I am a chick. If I were a male I would have just done the Christ shames the Pharisees. I think the Jesus thing was also provoked by my professions' embracing crown as an 'entertainment complex'. I was enraged by the incorporation of cinemas and theatres aimed at taking the gambling out of gaming and to neutralize the casino. I was outraged at the endorsement of actors of this. To me gambling is the opposite of theatre and movies. We are engaged in the act of creation and the function of what we do is to give. The casino's is to take and to anaesthetize the losers. I am appalled that they are using cinemas and the entertainment phrase to anaesthetize those they rob.

Journalist James Button (1997) quizzed Griffiths shortly after her casino-action. In his article, 'Whatever it takes for the naked truth', he asked, 'Did she have to be topless to do it? Absolutely. Sure, she nods, "flash your tits and get on television". But', Button added, 'she also knew she was going up against the most extravagant production Melbourne has ever seen'. Her photographer Samb Brown has told me in conversation (8 May 2001) that Rachel wanted the public to see 'the raw nakedness of what gambling was really doing'. But while many supported her cause, the church's response to the manner of Rachel Griffiths' protest was more circumspect. For example, local church newspaper *The Melbourne Anglican* only referred to the action of, 'Ms Griffiths, who had earlier protested outside the casino on its opening night' (Ashby 1997). Perhaps this is because, as David Aune (1983) suggests, 'While Jesus' purification of the temple is commonly regarded as a prophetic symbolic act, the radical nature of that action is seldom apprehended' (p. 162)?

Figure 3 'Jesus does damage to some ATMs'
Image Monoprint by Michael Donnelly
© Michael Donnelly 2000
Etching Ink on Heidelberg paper 295 x 290 mm
First exhibited at St Francis Pastoral Centre
Londsdale Street, Melbourne, during Lent in 2000

The Jesus Christ I believe in was the man who turned over the tables in the temple and threw the moneychangers out – substitute TV evangelists if you like (Bono [Paul Hewson], cited in Beard 2003 p. 242).

WHIP OF CORDS

JERUSALEM, PALESTINE: 12 NISAN (31 MARCH) 33

Brandishing a *flagellum*, 'a whip of cords', a man burst into the Royal Porch from the east and began a furious assault on the merchants. The *flagellum* was well known to the people as a metal-barbed instrument of torture used by their Roman overlords but the Galilean Rabbi's whip was probably hand-woven from the rushes used as bedding for the sacrificial animals; sticks and weapons were forbidden in the temple. It was of the kind his people used to drive their animals. This, after all, was to be its function.

Rampaging between the Corinthian-style pillars of polished marble, it is written that, 'He *drove* all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also *poured out* the coins

of the money changers and *overturned* their tables'. And he stopped people carrying anything through the temple.

The throng of spectators in the temple emporium were spellbound.

The skyscraper of its day, the temple which king Herod the Great had rebuilt 'to assure his eternal remembrance' (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.380) now towered above the city to the height of a modern ten storey building and spread over the area of a dozen football fields (cf Sanders 1992 pp. 54-69). It was said that, 'To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain, for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white' (Josephus, *War* 5.223).

As the heart of Judaism, the temple was where people came to observe the services, to pray, and to be blessed by the priests (cf Rousseau and Arav 1995 pp. 286-287). As much the literal as the symbolic heart of the nation, the temple

> was not, shall we say, the equivalent of Westminster Abbey, with 'Buckingham Palace' and the 'Houses of Parliament' being found elsewhere. The Temple combined in itself the functions of all three – religion, national figurehead and government – and also included what we think of as the City, the financial and economic world... [Therefore] it was not surprising that the Temple became the focus of many of the controversies which divided Judaism in this period (Wright 1992 p. 225).

It was the week of the great pilgrimage festival of Passover at which the people of Israel assembled annually. As by law the Passover meal had to be eaten in Jerusalem, perhaps as many as half a million worshippers from across the Mediterranean world crowded the city. At the climax of the festival, when the Passover lambs were sacrificed, the priests would sing songs from Israel's sacred writings:

> Who is like the Lord our God,
> who is seated on high,
> who looks far down
> on the heavens and the earth?
> He raises the poor from the dust,
> and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
> to make them sit with princes,
> with the princes of his people (Psalms 113:5-8).[4]

Probably because Passover 'embodied the theme of national liberation' (Sanders 1992 p. 138) it was sometimes an occasion when the aggrieved chose to protest. Protest was dangerous. 'It was one thing for this Nazarene to have made a name for himself playing the prophet in distant provinces, quite another to create a protest spectacle in the city of David – especially during the feast days, that tension-riddled season in the nation's life when old symbols of liberation, uneasily latent, always threatened to erupt again' (Myers 1994 p. 14).

On this occasion the action was all over in minutes. Neither the temple authorities nor the hundreds of Roman soldiers stationed nearby to deal with troublemakers had time to intervene. But soon after his action Jesus of Nazareth had been confronted by the religious authorities

(Mark 11:27-33; John 2:18-22) demanding to know by what authority he had dared to disrupt temple commerce. In just days he would be dead man, whipped by a *flagellum* and nailed to a cross outside the city to die as a tortured and humiliated public spectacle. Why had he done it? Why did it come to this?

As Jesus advanced towards the entrance to the western stairs, overturning their seats, he ordered those selling doves: 'Take these things out of here! "You shall not make my father's house a house of market"'.

Approaching the underground stairs to the exit at the double gates, as the traders scurried after their merchandise, he declared: 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a cave of robbers'.

Figure 4 'Christ Crucified at Chadstone' (Shopping Centre)
Monoprint by Michael Donnelly
© Michael Donnelly 2000
Etching Ink on Heidelberg paper 295 x 290 mm
First exhibited at St Francis Pastoral Centre
Londsdale Street, Melbourne, during Lent in 2000

PROVOCATIVE ONE-MAN STREET THEATRE

'The story is remarkably vivid… [It] was remembered and handed down in the tradition' (Taylor 1981 p. 461).[5] Jesus' 'little spectacular action' (German *wenig spektakuläre Aktion*: Trautmann 1980 p. 120) was included in all four biblical Gospels (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke

19:45-48; John 2:13-22), each of which used a word meaning literally 'to throw or cast out' (Greek *ekballō*) to connote the force of this action. The same word is also used for Jesus' exorcism ('casting out') of demons[6] – for example, in Jesus' parabolic saying: 'How can Satan *cast out* [*ekballein*] Satan?' (Mark 3:23) or his pronouncement: 'But if it is by the finger of God that I *cast out* [*ekbalō*] the demons then the kingdom of God has come to you' (Luke 11:20; parallel Matthew 12:28). What prompted Jesus, who on all other occasions seems to have resisted violence, to stage such an intervention 'with its sweeping violence' (Brown 1966 p. 122)?

We could argue that Jesus' behaviour has ample precedent in the Jewish Scriptures; specifically, in the traditions of prophetic symbolic actions.[7] After shaving portions of hair from his head and beard, which he then burned, struck with a sword around Jerusalem and scattered to the wind, the prophet Ezekiel declared: 'Thus says the Lord God: This is Jerusalem' (Ezekiel 5:5). The consequences he prophesied for the portions of the population thereby signified were analogous to his actions: the burned hair to death by pestilence, the hair struck with a sword to death by the sword, and the scattered hair to exile.[8] Such actions were 'signs and portents' in the ancient world.[9] 'This will be a sign for you', the prophet would often declare.[10] Bernhard Lang (1986) calls the actions of Ezekiel 'provocative one-man street theater' (p. 305). Referring to a prophetic action as 'symbolic' or 'theatrical' is instructive but also potentially misleading: 'By "symbolic action" I do not mean action that was merely metaphorical, devoid of concrete, historical character. Quite the contrary: I mean action whose fundamental significance, indeed *power*, lies relative to the symbolic order in which they occurred' (Myers 1988 p. 146, original emphasis). Myers illustrates with the examples of Martin Luther nailing his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church in 1517 and Martin Luther King, Jr., kneeling and praying before police dogs and water cannons (pp. 146-147). We know of prophetic symbolic actions from first century Israel which acquired their significance in the context of a 'political strategy of symbols' (Theissen 2002 p. 237).

> The historical period of Jesus was full of conflict expressed in political symbols. Herod Antipas called his capital Tiberias, built it on a cemetery, and erected images of animals in his palace. Pilate tried to introduce shields with emblems of Caesar into Jerusalem, and he minted coins with symbols of Roman cults. At the same time, prophets appeared among the people, and these prophets performed or announced symbolic actions that protested the acculturation to an alien culture (Theissen 2002 p. 237).

'Signs of freedom/deliverance' (*War* 2.259; 6.285) announced by would-be prophets (c. 36-72 CE) reported by the Jewish historian Josephus were 'historical analogies' (Horsley 1992 p. 284) alluding to the history of Israel, in particular the archetypal figures of Moses and Joshua and the exodus/conquest traditions. Theudas announced that the Jordan River would be parted – seemingly a claim to re-enactment of the miracle of Joshua (Joshua 3:7-4:24) with probable allusion to Moses and possibly also Elijah (Exodus 14:21-22; 2 Kings 2:8). The 'Egyptian' later claimed that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down as in the miracle of Joshua at Jericho (Joshua 6:1-27).[11] The biblical accounts of the original events, therefore, served as what Richard Horsley (1992) refers to as 'paradigmatic biblical history' (p. 295). 'Surely, they believed and hoped, God

would do the same now for them. If they but marched with faith and hope, God would do to Roman Jerusalem as once before and long ago to Canaanite Jericho' (Crossan 1995 p. 45).

Prophetic expectation in the first century CE was 'a pastiche of ideas drawn from various messianic and prophetic figures' (Aune 1983 p. 126). Matthew's Gospel says that when Jesus' questioned his disciples about public opinion regarding his identity, they replied: 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets' (16:14). Christian Grappe (2001 p. 408) argues that the temple-action and saying(s) critical of the temple, in particular, position Jesus among the prophets of his time. Prophetic oracles, especially those of Zechariah, may well have influenced Jesus' activity in Jerusalem.[12] But his temple-action had an echo in another prophetic figure, Jesus son of Ananias (c. 62-70 CE), whose prophetic denunciation of Jerusalem and the temple (*War* 6.300-309) used an expression from Jeremiah (ch. 7): 'a voice against the bridegroom and bride' (cf Aune 1983 pp. 135-137).[13] Whether it is Joshua juxtaposed with Theudas or Jeremiah with Jesus son of Ananias, a prominent feature to be found in the pastiche of prophetic ideas is this: scriptural texts 'spur concrete action' (Trumbower 1994 p. 33). In the light of such prophetic anticipations, we might well ask, what did Jesus intend his prophetic symbolic action to symbolise? Perhaps Jesus '*drove* [*ekbalō*] all of them out of the temple' (John 2:15) in conscious enactment of a prophecy of Hosea (9:15): 'Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will *drive* [*ekbalō*] them out of my *house*. I will love them no more; all their officials are rebels'; and/or maybe Zechariah inspired the style of Jesus' temple-action with his declaration: 'And there shall no longer be traders in the *house* of the Lord of hosts on that day' (14:21).

HOUSE OF MARKET

According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus' 'teaching' (11:17) concerning his temple-action consisted of a quotation from prophet Isaiah and an allusion to Jeremiah: 'a creative juxtaposition of two O[ld] T[estament] references to the temple to form an accusation against the temple authorities' (Bauckham 1988 p. 82).[14] These texts generated 'imaginative links' (Hays 2002 p. 408) to the 'symbolic world' (Syreeni 1999) of Jesus and his contemporaries within which they would have interpreted his action. Both references focus on the city of Jerusalem and its temple. Both are linked by the use of 'house' (Greek *oikos*) as a motif or 'catchword' (Wright 1996 p. 418). Isaiah proclaimed: 'My *house* shall be called a *house* of prayer for all the nations' (56:7d) and Jeremiah asked a rhetorical question (7:11a): 'Has this *house*, which is called by my name, become a cave of robbers in your sight?' John's Gospel reports Jesus as declaring: 'You shall not make my father's *house* a *house* of market' (2:16, my translation), in another play on 'house'. This link alerts us to the presence of an 'intertextual argument' (Myers 1988 p. 302). Jesus' antithetical saying contrasts two biblical descriptions of the temple: 'Is it not written? My house shall be called (that is, ought to function as) a *house of prayer*' (*oikos proseuchēs*)', Jesus said, 'But you have made it (into its antithesis) a *cave of robbers* (*spēlaion lēstōn*).[15]

Jesus' allusion to Jeremiah's 'cave of robbers' metaphor was probably 'a highly picturesque application of scripture to the royal portico' (Casey 1997 p. 313). His contemporaries may even have understood an ironic allusion to Herod the Great rising to prominence by driving Galilean 'robbers' or 'bandits' (*lēstai*) from their 'caves' (*War* 1.304-313; *Antiquities* 14:420-431). Social banditry was probably 'a recurrent social phenomenon' (Horsley 1995 p. 258; cf Malina and

Rohrbaugh 1992 pp. 157-158) in Jesus' home district of Galilee. A probable connotation of the metaphor was of the cave as a refuge for those who committed crimes, and the worst crime was when the temple itself was used for this purpose (cf Bauckham 1988 p. 84). Jeremiah prophesied: 'Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!" – only to go on doing all these abominations?' (7:8-10). 'There is no reason to suppose', Maurice Casey (1997) writes,

> that the description must both be literally understood and be correct any more than to suppose that the high priest worshipped Baal (cf. Jer 7:9), or that Herod Antipas had four legs and barked (cf. Luke 13:31-32). It is sufficient that the changers were making a profit, that the most vigorous prophet of the day could accuse them in scriptural terms of combining trade in the temple with inadequate religious lives in which they were making lots of money from the observant poor, that the chief priests were stinking rich, and that the results of collecting excessive amounts of money were visible in the gold flashing all around (p. 319).

I suspect that Jesus attacked the activities of the traders because the ruling priests were inaccessible in their 'cave' (cf Harvey 1982 p. 131).[16] 'The traders were there only because the true offenders [or at least those with ultimate responsibility] – the temple clergy – allowed them to be there' (Mann 1986 p. 447). It was these circumstances which both necessitated the 'conspicuousness' (German *Auffälligkeit:* Sato 1988 p. 305) and justified the 'confrontation and provocation' (Betz 1997 p. 459) of a violent prophetic symbolic action in the temple.

When Jeremiah concluded his temple prophecy (vv. 12-15), he did so by threatening its destruction – notice again the catchword: 'I will do to the *house* that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh' (v. 14). In the Jewish Scriptures, 'prophetic threats of destruction often accompany accusations of religious corruption and profanation of the Temple' (Evans 1997 p. 409), and the threats often accompany prophetic actions: Jeremiah breaking a pot (19:1-15) and Ezekiel laying siege to a brick city (4:1-3), for example. If Jesus also intended his action in the second temple as a portent of destruction, then Mark implies that the 'historical backdrop' (Wright 1996 p. 421) was the destruction of the first temple and the ensuing Babylonian exile. But whether it was understood as a protest, a purification, or a portent,[17] Jesus' temple-action would have been provocative because his criticism of the 'religious legitimacy' (Theissen 2002 p. 238) of the temple activities was an inherent threat to the religious, political, and economic *status quo* (cf Bauckham 1988 p. 88). 'If the prophetic-political readings of the passage are correct', writes William Herzog (1992),

> they suggest a possible reading of the saying in Mark that could place it in the context of Jesus' ministry. If this were the case, then Jesus would be declaring that the true social bandits were not the deviants operating out of the caves in the Judean wilderness but the prominent officials of the Temple built over the sacred cave on the Temple Mount. Their exploitative and oppressive domination

of the people through taxation and tribute represent the real social banditry of the time, even though it was masked as piety and religious obligation. Understood in this way, the saying fits the action, and both delineate Jesus' prophetic judgment of the Temple that would set the authorities against him and lead to his crucifixion (p. 820).

SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE

On the eve of Gulf War I, in a series of articles in the French newspaper *Libération* (4, 11 January and 29 March 1991), sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1995) (in)famously asserted that the war could not and – he contended later on TV – *did not take place*! As the console cowboys rained laser-guided bombs down on Baghdad the first cyberwar was simply consumed as a (carefully spin-doctored) media spectacle: a giant 24-hour video game 'live' on CNN. For viewers of this 'sanitized war' (Jobling et al. 2001 p. 25) it both could not and did not *really* take place as a war any more than someone using cyber porn experiences sexual intercourse. We saw apocalyptic visions of nighttime bombing but not the shedding of blood or the burning of flesh. This blurring of the real and the imaginary is hyperreality – an acute condition 'leaving reality the victim of a crime so perfect, as Jean Baudrillard says, that even its corpse has disappeared…' (Grant 1998b p. 65).

A master of hyperbole with a dose of technophobia, Baudrillard has, nevertheless, provocatively drawn attention to some ways in which the cyberblitz appears to be shaping us: 'What Baudrillard does is demonstrate the very real consequences of changes in symbolic and material forms, and this is important in a world increasingly dominated by media hype and obfuscation' (Lechte 1994 p. 236). According to Baudrillard, hyperreality has a symbiotic relationship with hypercapitalism and both are closely aligned with the media and popular culture, especially the burgeoning visual culture. Media spectacles both fabricate and fulfil the 'needs' of consumer society. 'The spectacle is not a collection of images', Guy Debord wrote in his 1967 book *The Society of Spectacle*; rather, it is 'a social relationship between people that is mediated by images' (Debord 1994 p. 12). Moreover, he said: 'In all its specific manifestations – news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment – the spectacle epitomises the prevailing model of social life… In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system' (p. 13). Baudrillard was influenced by Debord, but of crucial importance is not where he concurs with his analysis, but where he differs. Ian Hamilton Grant (1998a) observes that,

> Whereas, however, the crux of Debord's analysis was that, under spectacular society, we either acquiesce as passive consumers of the spectacle of our own, alienated, lives or, overthrowing the spectacle and its apparatus, we become active producers of revolution, for Baudrillard a revolution against the spectacle can only take the form of a spectacle, since if it did not it literally could not *take place*, would not register within spectacular society' (p. 38).

ALTERNATIVE REALITY

In his 'little spectacular action' in the temple, Jesus 'introduces an alternative reality' (Betz 1997 p. 459) by appropriating images from the past. Arguably the most confrontational and provocative – albeit unorthodox – (post)modern appropriation of images from history have taken place on the margins of Christianity in the activity of people such as the radical feminist philosopher Mary Daly or the Rastafarian reggae performer Bob Marley.[18] To these names we might add that of the French-Canadian movie-maker Denys Archand. Recontextualising the Gospels in a popular medium 'without trivializing the offensiveness of the Jesus story' (Kuschel 1997 p. 4), his movie *Jesus of Montreal* (Arcand 1989) prominently features a contemporary temple-action. A group of struggling actors in late 1980s Montreal are hired by the local Roman Catholic priest to 'modernise' the annual passion play. The theologically unorthodox, avant-garde style, outdoor performance with its crudely embodied scenes sparks controversy among the church hierarchy and is rejected by the priest. But it is off the set that the story is really played out in modern dress rather than period costume. The actors' own lives begin to imitate their art as they increasingly correspond to original events in the lives of Jesus and his disciples. Correspondences are indicated by the biblical characters they each portray and between aspects of their respective lives. Daniel portrays Jesus and his girlfriend Mireille the Virgin Mary. When Daniel/Jesus accompanies Mireille to a beer commercial audition, it explodes into a 'spectacular episode' (Kuschel 1997 p. 5). The director, her ex-boyfriend, insists she bares her breasts for the viewers. Livid at Mireille's degradation, Daniel/Jesus unleashes his anger: 'Want me to show you a real good scene?' Then the sparks fly, quite literally, as he angrily turns over the refreshment table, kicks over a camera, smashes a TV monitor, and strikes the director's offsider across the face with a ('whip' of) cables he had just torn from the TV. Cables in hand, shouting, 'Get out! Get out!', Daniel pursues the fleeing advertisers from the building. As they are hastily ushered out an exit, one says to another: 'Jesus! Who is that guy? He's crazy!' Perhaps Denys Archand is guilty of transforming the historical Jesus into 'a projection of our own values and ideals', as Stefan Klint (2000 p. 102) implies. He apparently intended that (among other things) the film would represent his personal concerns about both the ambiguous social role of the media and the clash between spirituality and commercialism. But the feature which drew my attention to *Jesus of Montreal* – but seemed to pass largely unrecognised by Christians amidst the furore over the unorthodoxy of certain elements – is 'what is stylistically most impressive about the film', which, as Karl-Josef Kuschel (1997) points out, is 'the transition from the role in drama to the role in real life, in which each role illuminates the other' (p. 4).

Jesus' approach to the interpretation of scripture emphasised *using* the texts as opposed to just *interpreting* the texts (Chilton 1984 pp. 187-188). Ched Myers (1994) demonstrates that in the tradition of the prophets of Israel, 'Jesus is presented not as a sage who explains life's mysteries but as the great interlocutor of reality' (p. 26). In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' interrogation of reality centres on challenges to understand the Scriptures: 'Have you never read…?', or 'Is it not written…?' (2:25; 9:12; 11:17; 12:10). 'In his direct action in the Temple', Myers concludes, 'Jesus assumes the role of a divine litigator indicting public crimes: "Is it not written"… Mark's Jesus is thus portrayed not as the *answer* to our private questions but as the question to our public *answers*' (p. 27). Myers also asserts that First World Christians often display 'a wilful ignorance of the complexities of modern capitalism, a benumbed apathy, a preoccupation with the trivial,

and a fascination with the spectacle' (p. 46). If so, could this be because we seldom apprehend the radical nature of Scriptures such as Jesus' temple-action?[19]

ENDNOTES

[1] Originally conceived of as what might be called a 'narrative epigraph' (cf Jobling et al. 2001 pp. 28-30, 35-39), my notes on Rachel Griffths' casino-action developed under the influence of a programmatic question quite similar to that which Sherwood (2001) recently asked of the biblical book of Amos: 'What happens if we take this manuscript out of its glass case and relocate it to a gallery of modern art?' (p. 9). I have asked: What happens if we take the text of a prophetic symbolic action and perform it on the street (outside a casino)? The resulting juxtaposition of Griffth's casino-action with Jesus' temple-action was suggested by the actress herself. The style of Griffith's action is reminiscent of a prophetic symbolic action of the prophet Isaiah who 'walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia' (cf 20:1-6). In terms of content, however, it has more in common with Jesus' temple-action. It was my original intention that my narrations of the casino and temple-actions should be printed in juxtaposition; that is, in two parallel columns like *Glas* (Derrida 1986). But since that was not practical in this format they are printed sequentially. I have also attempted to create intertextual links between catchwords, expressions, and themes in my argument. Like the 'snapshots' in *Europe: A History* (Davies 1997), my narration of both actions is 'impressionistic' (p. ix). I have not attempted to balance other opinions and perspectives. My narration of Jesus' temple-action is not intended as a study of the historical Jesus, although I have endeavoured to base it upon a plausible historical reconstruction of the event (which is referenced in the notes). Where I have dramatised the event, it is for the necessary purpose of conveying the 'confrontation and provocation' of the action.

[2] Stacey (1990) identifies numerous 'prophetic dramas' in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, including 1 Samuel 15:27-28; 1 Kings 11:29-31; 18:20-26; 19:19-20; 19:21; 1 Kings 22:1-12/2 Chronicles 18:1-11; 2 Kings 2:12-13; 13:14-17; 13:18-19; Isaiah 7:1-3; 7:10-17; 8:1-4; 20; Micah 1:8; Hosea 1:2-3; 1:3-9; 3:1-5; Jeremiah 13:1-11; 16:1-4; 16:5-7; 16:8-9; 18:1-12; 19; 25:15-29; 27-28; 32:1-15; 35; 36; 43:8-13; 51:59-64; Ezekiel 2:8-3:3; 3:22-27; 4:1-3, 7; 4:4-6; 4:9-17; 5; 6:11-14; 12:1-16; 12:17-20; 21:6-7, 12; 21:8-17, 28-32; 21:18-22; 24:1-2; 24:15-24; 24:25-27; 33:21-22; 37:15-28; Zechariah 6:9-15; 11:4-17. Several 'symbolic acts' (German *Zeichenhafte Handlungen*) of Jesus in the Gospels are identified by Trautmann (1980), including Mark 2:1-12; 2:13-17; 3:1-6; 3:13-19; 11:1-11a 11:15-17; 11:12-14, 20-25, and parallels. See also Fohrer (1968); Hooker (1997); Friebel (1999); McKnight (2000) for further biblical references and secondary literature.

[3] For the term 'street theatre', cf eg, Lang (1986 p. 305); Myers (1988 p. 294); for 'acted parable', Walker (1996 p. 5); Wright (1996 p. 421); Hooker (1997 p. 44); or for both, Hays (2002 pp. 406, 408).

[4] Scripture references (except where otherwise noted) are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible (NRSV), © Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA 1989. Where necessary for the sake of my argument I have adapted a word or phrase from this translation.

[5] Historical and interpretive interest in Jesus' actions, especially his temple-action, over the past two decades was provoked by *Jesus and Judaism* by EP Sanders (1985). Sanders argued that 'it is overwhelmingly probable that Jesus did something in the temple' (p. 61), and scholars have generally concurred with his conclusion that this was an historical action (eg, Aune 1983 p. 162; Borg 1984 pp. 172-173; Betz 1997 p. 456). There are compelling reasons to conclude that it was both historically possible and plausible (cf Witherington 1990 pp. 109-110; Evans 1995a pp. 346-352). The minority

viewpoint of certain North American scholars, such as Burton Mack, that temple-action is a 'Markan fabrication' (Mack 1988, pp. 291-292; cf Seeley 1993) not an historical event appears to be asserted primarily on literary grounds and is not historically convincing in my judgment. The temple-action is attested in all four Gospels but Mark and John are the major accounts. It is possible that John's version is from an independent source (cf Brown 1966 pp. 118-121). Brown (1966) identifies four features common to John and the synoptic Gospels: '*temple precincts; driving out the sellers of doves; overturning the tables of the money-changers; reference to the temple as a house*' (p. 119). Tan (1997 pp. 162-163) includes four elements which were probably constitutive of the action: Jesus driving out traders; overturning the tables of the money-changers; overturning the seats of the pigeon-sellers; and refusing to a allow anyone to carry anything through the temple; and he considers a concluding saying probable (cf Bauckham 1988 pp. 74-81). On the basis of agreements between Mark and John, Meier (1994 p. 893) suggests a sequence of six probable events: the action occurred close to Passover; Jesus came to Jerusalem with his disciples; he entered the temple; drove out the traders and money-changers; rebuked the authorities for turning the temple 'house' into a marketplace; and concluded with a citation of scripture to interpret the action. He concludes that 'the clearing of the temple in Mark 11:15-17 clearly parallels the same event in John 2:13-17 step by step' (p. 893). On this basis, I would argue that my narration of Jesus' temple-action is historically plausible. I have included details such as the 'whip of cords', mentioned only in John, for dramatic purposes. Of course, the absence of multiple attestation of such details in the Gospels does not by that very fact render them unhistorical, especially if John is an independent source. But my interpretation of the action is not dependent upon such details and, in fact, it needs (I contend) only to be characteristic of prophetic symbolic action in general, not of the temple-action in particular, for the purposes of my argument in this article.

[6] Mark 1:34; 39; 3:22; 23; 7:26; cf *Antiquities* 6.211.

[7] Most scholars agree that Jesus' action was prophetic in style and utterance (eg, Harvey 1982 p. 130; Sanders 1985 p. 70; Hooker 1997 p. 45; Evans 1997 p. 409; Tan 1997 pp. 185-186; Theissen 2002 p. 238). Immediately before Jesus' temple-action in Matthew's Gospel (21:12-17) the crowd is said to have acclaimed him as 'the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee' (v. 11). See Sato (1988) for a study of the historical Jesus and the prophetic tradition. His focus is on the sayings of Jesus in the hypothetical source Q, but he does include a brief section on prophetic symbolic actions (pp. 302-313).

[8] Prophetic symbolic acts (or sign-acts) signified their meaning according to 'the principle of analogy' (Fohrer 1968 p. 17; cf '*Analogiecharakter*' Trautmann 1980 pp. 383-388). This is instructively demonstrated by David Wright (1993; 1994) in his 'analogical analysis' of prophetic symbolic actions in 1 Kings 11:29-39; Jeremiah 13; 51:59-64a (Wright 1993 pp. 484-486; Wright 1994 p. 389). In my seminar at Uppsala University in 2004, I argued that Wright's illustration of the analogical analysis of prophetic symbolic actions in 1 Kings and Jeremiah demonstrated its value as an interpretive strategy for the phenomenon. I aim to employ this methodology further in a dedicated study of the prophetic symbolic actions of Jesus in the Gospels in a subsequent article.

[9] Eg, Exodus 7:3; Deuteronomy 26:8; Isaiah 8:18; John 4:48; Acts 2:22; cf *Antiquities* 20.168.

[10] Eg, Exodus 3:12; 1 Samuel 10:1; 2 Kings 20:9; Jeremiah 44.29; Ezekiel 4:3; cf Mark 13:4; Luke 2:12.

[11] *Antiquities* 20.5.1; cf Acts 5:36 (Theudas); *War* 2.261-263; *Antiquities* 20.169-172; cf Acts 21:38 (the 'Egyptian'). See Barnett (1980–1981); Bittner (1987 pp. 57-74); Gray (1993 pp. 112-144); Grappe (2001) on the activities of the 'sign-prophets'.

[12] See Witherington (1990 p. 114); Trumbower (1993 p. 514 n. 41); Wright (1996 p. 422); Evans (1999); Grappe (2001 p. 403).

[13] Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; 25:10. The correspondences between Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus son of Ananias extend much further than the coincidental sharing of a name. Evans (1995b) observes: 'Both entered the precincts of the temple at the time of a religious festival. Both spoke of the doom of

Jerusalem, the sanctuary, and the people. Both apparently alluded to Jeremiah 7, where the prophet condemned the temple establishment of his day ("den of robbers"; "a voice against the bridegroom and the bride"). Both were "arrested" by the authority of the Jewish, not Roman, leaders. Both were beaten by the Jewish authorities. Both were handed over to the Roman governor who interrogated them. Both refused to answer the governor and were consequently scourged. Governor Pilate may have offered release to Jesus of Nazareth, but did not; Governor Albinus did release Jesus son of Ananias' (p. 108, references omitted; cf Grappe 2001 p. 403).

14   I am perhaps in the minority in holding that the saying in Mark 11:17 is authentic, but this view is not without significant scholarly support (eg, Borg 1984 p. 173; Bauckham 1988 pp. 80-86; Chilton 1996 p. 93; Tan 1997 pp. 181-185; against Trautmann 1980 pp. 87-90; Harvey 1982 pp. 132-133; Sanders 1985 p. 66 and 367 n. 40). Prophetic symbolic action almost invariably involved an action and an interpretive saying together (cf Borg 1984 p. 173; Betz 1997 p. 458; Tan 1997 p. 181). Mark's account follows the characteristic form of a report (vv. 15b-16) followed by an interpretation (v. 17) (Aune 1983 p. 162; cf. Fohrer 1968 pp. 17-19). Even Harvey (1982 p. 133), who denies the authenticity of the Mark 11:17, acknowledges that a commentary on the action – especially of such a confrontational and provocative action – including 'scriptural explanation' would have been expected by Jesus' contemporaries. I am, therefore, in agreement with Borg that the burden of proof rests with those who argue that the saying is not integral to the incident and that it (at least) 'preserves the interpretation given by Jesus' (Borg 1984 p. 173). It is possible that the apparent discrepancy between Mark 11:17 and John 2:16 may be explained (in accordance with Witherington 1990 p. 111; cf Tan 1997 p. 184) by the conclusion that, 'You shall not make my Father's house a house of market', may be John's alternate version of 'My house shall be called a house of prayer... But you have made it a cave of robbers'.

15   The contrast was between the temple as a house of prayer and as a cave of robbers, not between the temple as a house of prayer and a house of sacrifice. Bauckham (1988) argues that Isaiah 56:7 uses the term 'house of prayer' to refer to it as a place of sacrifice with the temple sacrifices understood as central to Jewish prayer: 'Jesus was not downplaying the sacrificial cult. Rather he was insisting on its purpose: to be the expression of the prayer of those who came to the temple' (pp. 83-84).

16   After the temple-action, according to Luke, it was the temple authorities who sought Jesus' death (19:47-48). This would make sense if Jesus' criticism was directed primarily at corruption among the rich priestly aristocracy. Evans (1992; 1995 pp. 319-344) provides evidence of contemporary criticism of the temple establishment. The Gospels likewise include sayings of Jesus taking exception to the priestly establishment's economic oppression of the poor (eg, Mark 7:9-13; 12:38-40, 41-44).

17   While there is general agreement that the temple-action is historical, the interpretation of the action is a source of widespread disagreement. Three principal views may be identified. The traditional view is that the action constituted a cleansing or purification of the temple precincts, and this remains the view of many scholars (eg, Witherington 1990 p. 115; Evans 1997 pp. 435-436). Others interpret it as a protest or clearing (eg, Mann 1986 p. 447; Tan 1997 pp. 185-187). Sanders (1985 pp. 71-76) concluded that the temple-action was a portent of destruction (cf Wright 1996 pp. 413-424). It seems to me to be beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus was concerned with the purity of worship in the temple, but I am not sure that this necessarily precluded a prophetic judgment that threatened the destruction of the temple (against Chilton 1996 pp. 115-123). Actions such as clearing the animals, interrupting the trade, and preventing anyone carrying anything through the temple would seem to suggest purification. But, if we acknowledge, as I do, the authenticity of the saying in Mark 11:17, it also seems likely that the root of the impurity was commercial ('a house of market') and involved oppression ('a cave of robbers'). Bittner (1987 pp. 271-274) rightly insists upon the 'unambiguousness' (German *eindeutigkeit*) of prophetic signs, and that an interpretation must be possible in the context. I believe a purification-portent interpretation is plausible (even probable) in the context of the prophetic tradition. As Brown (1994 p. 455; cf 1966 pp. 121-122) argues, the Gospel writers saw

Jesus' criticism of the temple as similar to the ancient prophets' expectations of the purity of the temple. The same prophets moved from calling for purity to predicting the temple's destruction if the situation was not remedied (cf Jeremiah 7:14; 26:6, 9; Micah 3:12), and the Gospel-writers understood Jesus' action accordingly. Even if the destruction of the temple was not symbolised by the elements of Jesus' action this does not necessarily mean that it was not implicit in the scenario invoked by the prophetic saying which accompanied the action (cf Bauckham 1988 p. 175 n. 82).

[18] In my seminar at Uppsala in 2001 I analysed an 'exodus' which was both symbolic and real performed by ex-Roman Catholic theologian turned radical feminist philosopher Mary Daly at Harvard University's Memorial Church on 14 November 1971 (Daly 1972; 1993 pp. 137-140). Invited to be the first woman to preach at Harvard in its 336-year history, Daly chose the occasion to demonstrate her exodus from what she understood as slavery in a religion which she considered sexist and to which she would never return. In her sermon Daly urged those who participated in this 'sign of radical disassociation' (Maitland 1983 p. 141) to form a post-Christian exodus community, a new promised land outside institutional religion. I aim to publish a revised form of my analysis of Daly's 'exodus' and her reception of the prophetic tradition in another subsequent article. In a 'narrative epigraph' to my 2004 seminar I observed how exodus and exile coalesced in the (Rastafarian) liberation theology of the 1970s reggae performer Bob Marley. Marley's music waged an unrelenting campaign against racial 'downpression' by the existing social order ('Babylon'). Rastafarian hermeneutics operate by 'finding correspondence between revelation [from personal experience] and a biblical event, symbol or word' (Beckford 1998 p. 122). The provocative lyrics of Marley's 'songs of freedom/redemption songs' feature many perceived correspondences with the biblical prophetic tradition, eg, 'Send us another brother Moses!', and, 'We're leaving Babylon/We're going to our Father land' (Marley 1984). Repatriation ('exodus') to Africa ('Zion') is anticipated as God's act of redemption.

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