

INDIVIDUALLY FASHIONED!

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From the place of His habitation He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; he considers all their works (Psalm 33:14-15).

I was driving home today listening to a radio interview by the Australian painter/artist-designer **Ken Done**. Born in 1940 **Done** left school aged 14 and entered the National Art School in East Sydney. After 5 years of study he commenced a highly successful career as an art director and designer in New York, London, and Sydney.

As the interview on our **Australian Broadcast Corporation's** channel with **Ken Done** continued, I was enthralled by his childhood memories growing up on the Clarence River in Northern New South Wales. Although I am not as old as he is, **Ken** sparked a lot of my own carefree childhood memories such as being able to go to school bare foot, as many of my school mates did. (My grandfather said they did the same, and in the winter months on the way to school they would stand in the fresh cow 'pies' to warm their feet ... can you imagine how that class room must have stunk when all the cow-poo barefoot kids entered?!)

Then the interviewer got onto **Ken's** artwork. He still feels that a 5 year child can paint better than he can, though he feels he is slightly better than the paintings of 8 year olds. I will let you figure out his rationale for that (Hint: It has something to do with a 5 year old's transparent honesty!).

Done is about to have a unique exhibition of paintings never before seen by the public. He explained how each painting is unique with no reproductions or copies. Each has a special significance to only himself: A new technique, a new design, new colour combinations, a special memory, a particular feeling that nobody else even knows about. The over 50 paintings he is about to reveal to the public are one-offs, and certainly not reproduced on designer clothes. Each one carries something of the artist *himself* in it. Each one is really a snapshot of his own heart!

The interviewer then asked **Ken** how he feels whenever he sees someone in the street wearing one of his paintings on one of his designer shirts. He immediately told the story of his mother who was walking through the Red Square in Moscow when across the strip she spotted a man wearing one of her son's shirts with the unmistakable style and colouring of her son's artwork.

Mum rushed over and accosted the man. All the while she was excitedly announcing, "**That's the work of my son, Ken Done! That's my son's painting!**" The interviewer exclaimed, "That must stir your heart with pride!"

As the interview continued, my mind was beginning to wander. I began to think about how early, that very morning in fact, I had walked out onto our deck and had looked up into a cloudless, brilliantly sunny morning, with the ocean shimmering in the distance, and the gum trees gently rustling in the cool breeze.

On our pool fence there were 6 beautiful Australian Sulphur-Crested cockatoos prancing and skipping to get a drink. I remember especially admiring their obvious intelligence as they kept their clear, beady, black, eyes on me yet seeming to gather I was a friendly kind of guy! (We used to have a pet cockatoo named Princess, and I can tell you from first-hand knowledge, they are incredibly insightful and knowledgeable and chatter incessantly.)

Now you may think I have a screw loose upstairs, but this morning I told those wild birds to their faces (in a gentle voice, of course) how amazing they were. I told them how I was admiring not only their brilliant white feathers with their yellow crests, but that I was lost in awe at their Creator. (I often tell our beautiful pet dog how gorgeous she is and how I sense my Father God's Presence and beauty in her, too.)

Suddenly my mind was unexpectedly jolted into the stark reality of this world as it stands in rebellion against its Maker. Who would want to shoot these masterpieces just for fun? Who would want to torture innocent animals like the young man who shot an arrow through a Koala and left it not far from us? Who would cage a bear and milk its bile for an entire life of indescribable cruelty? Who would want to drive over and deliberately ruin a prize-winning master garden in my hometown of Toowoomba just for the spite of it?

The canvass of memories my mind had been enjoying was suddenly invaded by all these horrible thoughts. It hit me like a ton of bricks. Imagine how our Father God's handiwork is being daily attacked. Every time we hurt, injure, maim, or destroy something of His beautiful creative handiwork, we are clenching our fists in His loving face, driving a thorn through His artist's creative heart.

Here in Australia massive amounts of native vegetation are being mown down to put up acres and acres of solar panels and wind turbines (falsely called "renewables" for they only have a very limited life-span of a couple of decades at best.) We see the threat against whole species, the land-degradation happening as I write, the pollution of the seas by plastics, and ... well, you get the picture.

This world and all its beautiful 'natural' creatures and features is God's canvas. His signature is in every minute cell all the way up to the giants of the oceans and the staggering array of every kind of creature imaginable. And we have been put here as stewards, caretakers on behalf of their Creator. Our record is deplorable.

It's like we have poured tons of paint over God's canvas and said, "Take that!" It's like those mindless morons who take a can of spray paint, or a pocket knife, or flour

and eggs to the canvass of some famous painting to protest some 'woke' agenda like "climate change". What an insult. The artist, if he or she is still alive, would recoil in horror. It must feel like they are being personally violated. How much more must it be for our heavenly Father? At least so far, rebellious men have not been able to pollute other planets ... though we have cluttered up our own inner space with satellite debris floating around our own planet.

A PSALM OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LORD IN CREATION AND HISTORY

Psalm 33 is a fairly well-known and greatly loved Psalm. The **Word Biblical Commentary** says: "The precise focus of praise in these verses is the divine, all-seeing omniscience. The omniscience is related to the beings and actions of individual human persons. Thus there is a transition from the cosmos to international affairs to the microcosm of the lives and actions of individuals. God is the one who fashions human hearts (cp. Gen. 2:7). As the creator of each individual person, God perceives the thoughts and actions of each individual person." (¹)

Verses 14-15 cited at the rubric of this article are where I wish to draw these few meditations to their conclusion: **From the place of His habitation He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; he considers all their works (Psalm 33:14-15, NKJV).**

English translations don't seem to give it its full import and impact: The **NASB** and the **NIV** and most similar modern translations read; **"He Who forms the hearts of all."** Taken this way, it's a general statement that all humanity is the creation of God. Nothing different to what the Bible says about how mankind is the special and particular work of the Creator, and that as such God knows their hearts and will call each person to give an account of how we have handled the precious gift of life he has bequeathed to each of us.

Although I don't read the Hebrew, as best I can determine it seems to agree that this is the sense: God fashions the hearts of all humanity alike, or all together, and so considers all their ways. This is true, but is this all the verses are saying?

The Greek OT Bible, the Septuagint (LXX), gives, I think, a delightful surprise, for it may be also translated as either, **"He is the One Who individually fashions their hearts"**, or, **"He is the One shaping individually their hearts"**. (The **NKJV** at the top of this article captures the idea admirably.)

The difference is powerful: Generally, it's true that God alone is the One fashioning the hearts of all humanity. But specifically, each human heart has been personally crafted by God. Our personalities, our individual differences, our emotional and "soul-makeup" has been overseen and crafted with immense love and care by our God for each one of us! Each human is uniquely shaped by the Living God!

¹ Quote supplied in private correspondence to me by **Sir Anthony Buzzard**.

Personally I prefer the LXX over the Hebrew (and most English translations) which seems to allow for the fact that although our parents give us the biological life and genes with our family traits, it is the Creator Who determines the personality for His purposes on earth through each handcrafted individual person! The Greek indicates, "He is the One shaping individually their hearts". A delightful *double entendre*?

Thus, I like the idea that each baby is individually "fashioned" or "formed" (the Greek word indicates careful moulding like that of a potter who takes intense interest with each vessel he creates!). Which is to say, each precious baby aborted is a tragic insult to our beloved Creator's intended beauty and purpose for that one soul / life.

THE LONG-DISCUSSION THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY

Anyone at all familiar with the long discussions within church history will know that the great thinkers and theological scholars have been unable to determine where each baby's "soul" comes from. Is it a gift from its parents? Is it directly from God Himself? Both? Well, I think these couple of verses can give some clarity.

We know that in the beginning it was the LORD God who breathed His breath into Adam who by that action became **a living soul**. But does He need to breathe into each baby conceived that Divine breath, or are parents the imparters of that "divine spark"? Is it from both God and parents? As I say, debate has waxed and waned on each point.

As parents we are co-creators of biological life but, according to **Psalm 33:14-15** only our God and Father determines each individual's character or "heart" (though of course, He is careful to weave into the baby many similar "soul characteristics" of the mother and father). David says as much, knowing that God had prepared or **knitted** him in the womb (e.g. **Ps. 139:13ff**).

Whatever conclusion on this question we come to, one thing is for sure. The Bible teaches each individual human being's heart comes directly fashioned from God Himself!

Of the 1 to 2 million ova (oocytes) a baby girl has (at birth!) and of the 500 million to over a trillion sperm a man produces in his lifetime, at the end of the day each union of one egg and one sperm is surely under our God's loving eye and input! If the Psalmist is to be believed — and surely he is — it's not as random as our secular society likes us to believe, for surely He has the last word in which egg and which individual sperm combine at fertilisation?! You are a miracle! (²)

² The Bible says God knows each star by name and there are roughly 10,000 stars for each grain of sand on all the beaches of the earth — as stated by **Shahmoradian, F.S.** in *Reign of the Essence: Encyclopedia of Critical Thinking*, AuthorHouse, Bloomington, IN, 2022. Why doubt that God knows and individually fashions each human being as carefully and has numbered each and every hair on our heads!?

ABORTION: THE GREATEST INSULT AND DEFAMATION OF OUR CREATOR

It used to be considered treason to burn the flag of one's own country. It still is considered a declaration of hostility to burn the flag of another country. How much more is it treason and insult against the God of heaven to destroy any man, woman, child, and yes, or unborn baby created in His own divine image? Each heart has been individually crafted by the Creator.

Abortion is a violent assault on the baby's body and even more significantly, its own "heart and soul", temperament, and destiny, as dreamed and hoped for, and shaped by God Himself.

If an artist's, or sculptor's, or painter's, or designer's, or gardener's, work is ripped up, defaced, painted over, rejected and disdained, the creator feels personally slighted. Part of themselves is invested in their creation. How much more is the Creator's heart stabbed every time another human being is injured, murdered, mocked, and yes, aborted for no sane reason! After all, he once looked upon the completed work of His hands and pronounced it all **very good**.

If **Ken Done's** mother could run across the Red Square in Moscow excitedly proclaiming, "**That's the work of my son, Ken Done! That's my son's painting!**", then I can imagine the pride in our Creator's heart when each handcrafted and individually fashioned baby enters the world, "**That baby boy is born in My image! That beautiful baby girl has the very heart I put there!**"

Sadly, the Devil stands ever ready to "hack" the life out of each precious life. The Great Fiery Red Dragon, metaphorically speaking, always stands **before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her child as soon as it was born ... (Rev 12:3-4)**.

Just a few thoughts that entered my own heart today!

POSTSCRIPT

After reading this article a reader asked this question: **What do you make of Christians who say we should be vegetarians due to similar arguments you make?** My immediate and brief reply was to write:- **I would say that Jesus ate fish and lamb! And the apostle Paul teaches that all foods are to be received with thanksgiving, including butcher's meat or "flesh".**

Creation is given for our enjoyment, appreciation, and to inspire awe in the Artist—not to be worshipped in and of itself. A tree may be cut down for our use and needs, and then, I think, another one should be responsibly planted for the next generation. Fishing and farming should be responsible and with future generations in mind.

