



# The Biblical Narrative as Public Theology

By *Martin Robinson*

**I**magining Tomorrow II was a remarkable conference held in London in October last year. It was the second in a series of three events, the first held in Swanwick in 1997 and the third to be held in Cambridge in 1999. Taken together, the purpose of this series of events is to act as a consultative catalyst for the creation of what has come to be known as a “public theology”. In opening the Book to the people and the people to the Book, it is essential that the Book is opened in this very public way.

This edition of *Transmission* reproduces parts of two of the major contributions, one from Susan White and one from Walter Wink, so that their offerings to the debate might reach a broader audience than the delegates able to attend the conference. In addition, there is an attempt to reflect some of the flavour of the discussion that surrounded these contributions in the selection of the remaining pieces in this edition.

Some caveats and clarifications are necessary. First it should be said that both Susan White and Walter Wink gave more than that which is contained in these pages. Information concerning the tapes of the full talks and the books from which Walter Wink was drawing is detailed at the conclusion of each piece. Jenny Taylor and Peter Neilson were not speakers at *Imagining Tomorrow II*, but the material in their articles conveys some of the concerns that were expressed at the event.

In their very different ways, Susan White and Walter Wink suggest for us the context against which our parishioners are living their lives. Few of us can express our questions and concerns as eloquently as these writers but that does not mean we cannot recognise these concerns when they are voiced.

It is clear that we are entering a time of competing stories. There are many myths, new and old, that are currently jostling for our attention and our assent. The response of the wider public to these various accounts of reality will determine the future shape of our world. Even if the dominant response is for us to be so confused that no clear answer comes, then that very confusion can give permission to usher in a future that we do not wish.

Both Wink and White seek to draw inspiration from the Biblical narrative, not as a safe established haven which seeks to end all other stories, but as a creative story of redemption which retains the capacity to both critique and value the other stories that surround us. ■

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