



ON THE ROAD

Newsletter
of the
**Anabaptist Association of
Australia and New Zealand Inc.**
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Mark Your Calendars AAANZ Bi-National Conference 21-24 January 2005 Greenhills Centre Canberra

Speaker:
Dr. Chris Marshall
Internationally known
Bible Scholar, Teacher
and Author from
New Zealand



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ROSS COLEMAN

It's that time of year again to renew membership in AAANZ or become a member if you haven't already.

People often think when joining an organisation "What do I get from this?" Joining AAANZ you get the quarterly newsletter, regular emails, and the fellowship of like-minded Christian brothers and sisters.

But another thought is "What am I giving?" You are giving support to the presentation of an alternative Christian message in Australia and New Zealand. You are supporting the work of AAANZ keeping the publishing and emailing services going. And you are supporting the ministry of Mark and Mary Hurst, our AAANZ pastoral workers. The year ahead, we hope to have the Hursts visit around Australia and New Zealand promoting the vision of AAANZ. Your support is needed to make this financially possible.

Please see our website at www.anabaptist.com.au for more information about membership. Your participation with us in this ministry is greatly appreciated.

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**MAY THE GOD OF PEACE AND
JUSTICE BE PRESENT IN YOUR
LIFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON
AND THE YEAR TO COME**

On The Road

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COVER SYMBOL: The lamb in the midst of briars is a traditional Anabaptist symbol. It illustrates the suffering Lamb of God, who calls the faithful to obedient service and discipleship on the road. This particular rendition is from *Hymnal A Worship Book* Copyright 1992. Reprinted with permission of Mennonite Publishing House, Scottsdale, PA, USA.

THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

MARK AND MARY HURST

...to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service

The dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Luke 1:78-79



Advent is a time of waiting for the light of Christ to break fully into our world of darkness. It is a time of waiting to sing the joyous songs of Christmas announcing the good news of Christ's birth. Advent is the season to remember God's promises about a new world where...

LETTERS

I read the newsletter last Friday and as always found it thought-provoking. I am mulling these topics of homosexuality in the church/homosexuality and marriage, redemptive violence and cross-cultural bridges between first and third world Christians. I don't have any well-thought out opinions as yet but am grappling with a couple of things.

With respect to the homosexuality issues, my church is divided on these issues but the leadership is liberal - meaning that they are against the Presbyterian Church doctrine ... that only celibate homosexuals can be clergy and elders/deacons.

This doctrine has been fought about ad nauseum in church conferences/meetings. Many think that it will eventually split the church (as we are seeing for the Episcopal Church). My thinking is that anthropologists have noted the presence of a

...people of the Middle East and Africa and Latin America...are richer in spirit than Americans. They are happier, more joyful, and more social.

...he has scattered the proud...
brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
Luke 1:51-53

We present articles, book reviews, poetry, and news in this issue to enrich you during this season of waiting. From the light of Christmas, we move to Jesus telling his followers "You are the light of the world." What does that mean for us? John Olley shares some reflections on this theme in our lead article.

The year ahead will involve more travel for us. We hope to make it to South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, and New Zealand. We would love to meet ON THE ROAD readers in these areas. Please let us know about people to contact and good times to visit as we are still putting our schedule together.

Howard Thurman's poem about Christmas has appeared in this newsletter before but we think it captures well the spirit of Christmas.

**"When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,
To make music in the heart."**

minority of homosexuals in ancient cultures to present day times and that some sort of accommodation needs to be made (besides celibacy or being made eunuchs!). However, the thinking that marriage should be reserved for male-female unions makes a lot of sense to me. Back to Genesis - "male and female he created them".

On to redemptive violence...many cultures have redemptive violence in their myths/folktales. What makes American culture so extreme in this mentality then?

Finally, the chasms separating Christians from the developed and developing world. Some of this was aptly described in *The Poisonwood Bible*, which I read a few years ago. Some of it has to do with people in very different societal modes - i.e. survival mode vs. affluent modes. I have noted many times in my friendship with people of the Middle East and Africa and Latin America that these folks are richer in spirit than Americans. They are happier, more joyful, and more social. Hospitality is really important as is sharing whatever they have and living in the moment. They definitely put me to shame.

Just some superficial thoughts about the newsletter topics but I have 3 months til the next newsletter so I will continue to mull them around.

- A North American Reader (Wishing to remain anonymous)

Advent Meditation

The earth turns . . . a bird still sings

JON RUDY

On the first morning the sun rose.
Its warm fingers extended a gentle caress
through the grass, trees and flowers
in an original kiss of heaven and earth
and the world was one.

On the first morning the dew lay in crystal
clear droplets
expectant with the nourishment only pure
water can offer,
sparkle of life as it is, promise of growth to
come
gift to quench the thirst of all living
creatures.

On the first morning scarlet spangle of
sunbird flashed on high
signaling the freedom found in the beauty of
balance
singular reflection of the multitude of wings
celebrating multiplicity of creation.

The earth turns . . .

The tired orange orb of the tropical sun,
its fetid heat cursed by day and dreaded by
night,
stabs through diesel exhaust, cook fuel
smoke and pavement dust churned up
by men forgetting their essence, in a quest,



racing to unknown urgencies
only to foul their Eden.

Rain hammers down, not with tender life
giving sustenance, but to the peril of many
brown turbid sewage seeps away from
human hovels
like life blood oozing from those whose
tears
are washed away in a torrent of confusion
and a propensity for death.

A bird is snared, it's crimson wings
shackled to human failure
greedily caged only to be peddled in the
marketplace like a cheap toy
hawked by the hungry to relieve the pang
in bellies too long without sufficient rice
offered to a world who no longer listens
from the heart
a sacrament from the impoverished.

Yet the bird still sings . . .

The sun sets on the fulcrum of history
a baby's cry rends the stillness of the night
with subjugated beasts as the only mute
witnesses
to the commencement of mending the
fragmented and shattered shards
which will once again contain the delight of
an overflowing spirit.

Water of life emanates from the manger
urging the nations to come for a drink
to quench the blaze which sears
bitter spirit from marrow.

Harbinger of wholeness the dove of peace
descends upon the Christ child
only to soar heavenward spreading its
wings of freedom
invitation to a world where oceans of
sorrow
are transformed into sails of praise
while day and night embrace.

- Jon Rudy, MCC (Mennonite Central Committee)
Asia Peace Resource, Davao City, Philippines

Live Gently, The Lord Is Near

MARK S. HURST

Now the works of the flesh are obvious...strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness...By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Galatians 5:19-23

“Gentleness” has been popping up in my devotional reading recently. And as Karl Barth suggested, I tend to read my Bible along with the daily newspaper. What a contrast!

In the Australian political news this week we had the head of one political party physically and verbally abusing another Senator in the parliament while being drunk and accused of stealing bottles of wine from a Christmas party.

The Prime Minister unleashed his “attack dogs” on the new leader of the Labor Party who himself was an “attack dog” for his party in the past. The same new Labor leader was forced to apologize to another public figure to avoid going to court on defamation charges.

Strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness...

On the world stage we have national leaders berating each other, rewarding their mates who supported them in going to war, and using tough language to threaten all the evildoers of the world. From Mugabe to Howard, from Bush to Blair, we hear words of sham toughness and strength.

By contrast...love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...

Marva Dawn reminds us that God calls Christians to model something different in the world. “He [Paul] summons us to alternative attitudes, alternative words, alternative behaviours, alternatives of our whole being personally and corporately. What he wants is for our character to be formed into a certain kind of person, the image of God.” (*Morning By Morning*, Eerdmans, 2001, p.351)

Dawn comments on Ephesians 4:29 that says:

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

“It will cost us to live this way because the world around us does not expect grace...But imagine what the world could be like if everyone lived according to God’s design for language that uplifts, that imparts grace!” (351)

Philippians 4:5, 6 says:

Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near, do not worry about anything...

Commentary in the *Upper Room Disciplines 2003* says this:

“Because ‘the Lord is near,’ we let our ‘gentleness be known to everyone.’ The Lord’s ‘nearness’ serves to remind us that Jesus models this gentleness. This advice is 180 degrees from the counsel we receive from society...”

As those before Christ’s birth lived in the hope of his first coming, we on this side of his birth live in hope of his coming again. Regardless of where we are in history, the Lord is near – so we need to live like it. The Lord’s nearness requires that we live gently – and without worry!

...One can only wonder: If we lived more gently would we have less to worry about? In our post 9/11 age, gentleness and kindness are not highly sought-after commodities. Yet the verse is still in the Bible. It still flies in the face of conventional wisdom.” (359)

Early Anabaptist prayers echo this call to gentleness. In our age of road rage, shopper rage, etc. this prayer for gentleness and Christ-likeness is quite a contrast:

O Thou gentle, patient, longsuffering Lord! Forgive us all our sins, our shortcomings, our mistakes...plant in us the seeds of humility as the root and foundation of virtue.

Purge from us all resentment and revenge, and fill us with meekness so precious in Thy sight...

Thy life was nothing but love, meekness, and humility. Make us partakers of Thy divine nature, so that Thy virtuous life may be reflected in our lives...

If Thou art our light, so shine in us; if Thou art our life, so live in us; if Thou art our joy, fill us with rejoicing; if we are temples of Thy Spirit, take full possession of us and make us holy in body, soul, and spirit...Amen.

(*A Devoted Christian’s Prayer Book*, Pathway Publishing, 1976. Translated from a Mennonite devotional book dating back to 1739, or earlier.)



Sign for workshop offered at MWC Africa 2003

“Every year, Advent gives us another chance to accept our poverty before God, and recognize God-with-us – not in our heavily defended illusions of security but in our total insecurity. At Christmas, we may come to the manger and lay our own smallness before the miracle of God made small for us.”

- “The Poverty Of God”, Deborah Smith Douglas, *Weavings* XVIII:6, p. 12.

[Editorial Note: Below is an edited version of an article first appearing in **Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies** 20-1, 39 (2003), 9-28. For a copy of the entire article, complete with notes and sources, contact us, or the author at the address listed below.]

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

“You are Light of the World”: a Missiological Focus for the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew

BY JOHN W. OLLEY

“You are the light of the world” has been a powerful image as Christians have considered their life and witness in the world. It has been a theme of countless sermons and conferences, and yet little consideration has been given to its significance in the gospel of Matthew.

“You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” are the first words of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew, following announcement of the reversals of eschatological blessing (Matt 5:3-16). There follows immediately a statement about “righteousness” (5:17-20), and then various specific instances of expected behaviour. Surprisingly this location and arrangement are given little attention in major discussions of mission in Matthew, and in commentaries the juxtaposition seems to be mentioned, if at all, with limited comment, more attention being given to the intention of the specifics in the sermon on the mount, and the interpretation of individual verses.

I argue here that Old Testament and other parallels point to a close link between “light”, “city”, “righteousness” (and torah “instruction”), the coming of the kingdom, and “the nations” sharing in blessing. Hence, the behaviour of the community is of key significance for the mission of God’s people: the ethics described in the sermon on the mount have a missiological motivation. Matt 5:14-16 is also strategically placed following the narrative of the first four chapters. Finally, the positioning of these words at the beginning of Jesus’ teaching, along with the well-known ending of the book (28:18-20), provide a powerful missiological framework and focus for all the teaching of Jesus in Matthew and for the life of the community of disciples.

The imagery of “light” and link with “righteousness”

Gerhard von Rad, in an article originally published in 1949, was probably the first modern scholar to suggest that the “city on a hill” refers to Jerusalem, based upon Isaiah 2:1-4; 60:1-21. This has been extended with further supporting evidence, and adopted by many modern commentators. Some object that, since *polis* has no article (“a city”), the sense is general. Nevertheless, given the wealth of imagery that sees Jerusalem (whether people or temple) as “light” that attracts the nations, together with the association with “doing what is right”, it is most likely that a contemporary hearer would immediately think of Jerusalem as the city on a hill par excellence (compare Revelation 21, especially v. 24).

Old Testament and later Jewish Imagery

Isaiah 2:1-4 describes a great change:

“The place with which Yahweh has chosen to associate his redemptive purpose will rise up from its inconspicuous and unrecognised position, and will be seen in all its glory by the whole world, with the result that it will be the centre of a universal pilgrimage for all nations.” (Gerhard von Rad, *“The City on the Hill,” The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966, 234).

The wider Isaianic context illuminates what is involved in the transformation that attracts. In Isaiah 1:21-26 Jerusalem (people) is to be transformed so that she becomes what Yahweh intended: “a city of righteousness” (i.e., a city where all, especially leaders, do what is right and just and there is harmony). At that time nations will be drawn to her, for true instruction and guidance will flow from her [torah in 2:3 is more general than “law”, referring to “teaching, instruction”, including resolution of disputes (the corresponding verb, “teach, instruct”, occurs earlier in 2:3)]. In light of the future God’s people are bidden now, “come, let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:5).

Von Rad discusses also Isaiah 60 where the redeemed, restored Jerusalem is “light” to which “the nations will come” (the city is addressed by the use of the 2nd feminine singular pronoun). Here “light” involves the restoration of Zion, becoming full of glory and beauty. Included in the description of the city is that all will be “righteous” (60:21; compare 61:3, 8, 10-11).

In Isaiah the contrast between “light” and “dark” covers the whole of the life of a community. Thus “darkness” can describe a situation of defeat, devastation, injury and captivity as a result of war (e.g., 9:2 [Hebrew 9:1]; 49:9), and oppressive social settings where injustice is rife (58:10; 59:9), while “light” as the obverse is a situation where everything has been “put right”. It is God who is going to act, delivering the people from “darkness” and providing leaders who will do “what is right” (11:1-9; 32:1).

God’s acts of deliverance are linked with changes in community behaviour. Hence the Hebrew words *tsedeq/tsedaqah*, commonly translated into English as “righteousness”, include God’s actions of deliverance, divine and human behaviour both “putting right” and “doing what is right”, and describe the situation where “all is right”. There can be no lasting prosperity (peace, well-being, health) without a concomitant “right” behaviour by the people. In general there is the idea of “putting or being right”, with the context explaining the particular feature that is “right”. “Light” and “righteousness” (both as God’s deliverance and as human behaviour) are closely linked.

With the fluidity of thought in moving from “city” to “inhabitants” there is a ready link with other passages in Isaiah where God’s people are to be “light to the nations”. In Isaiah 42:6, “my servant” is addressed (in surrounding chapters “my servant” is Israel, e.g., 41:8; 43:10): his role is to “establish justice in the earth”, which includes bringing prisoners from darkness to light. Similarly in 49:6 the role as “light to the nations” is “so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth”. The Isaianic context shows that “salvation” involves

"...we need to get our minds around the staggering humility and self-emptying poverty of God in order to begin to glimpse what love God has for us, that, as St. Francis marvelled, God would become poor for us in this world...Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), a Franciscan mystic, rejoiced in the interior freedom that her hard-won humility and poverty granted her. On her deathbed, she urged her followers, 'my little children, strive to be small,' that they too might enter the redeeming poverty of God."

- "The Poverty Of God", Deborah Smith Douglas, *Weavings* XVIII:6, p. 12

putting all kinds of situations "right": bringing God's people out of prison and bondage, causing the nations to recognize Yahweh, and punishing those who resist his purposes, and bringing about a world, centred in Jerusalem, where all is right, and all do what is right.

Although "light" is not used, the link between attracting and bringing blessing to the nations and doing what is right, with reference to God's "law/teaching", is seen elsewhere in the Old Testament. To cite two instances:

Genesis 18:18-19: Blessing to Abraham and through him to the nations is associated with behaviour: "he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just."

Deuteronomy 4:5-8: The enjoyment of blessings in the land together with the obeying of God's commands will result in "the nations" being amazed at both the "nearness" of God when people pray (the context suggests blessing and protection) and their "righteous decrees".

In other Jewish material, the imagery of "light" is sometimes linked with the temple, or specifically with the Torah. It is clearly not possible to separate these various components, they merge together: "light" is both the enjoyment of freedom, prosperity, harmonious society, and peace, the situation where all is right and all do what is right (opposite to "darkness" as prison, blindness, death, and injustice and oppression), and the consequent attraction, with others coming to share in that light. This "light" comes from a people who enjoy the presence of God (the temple filled with glory), and who live as a city where God's ways are both proclaimed and obeyed. It is the total composite of God's saving presence and the matching lifestyle of the people that attracts the nations, bringing blessing to them.

It is obvious in each reference that the then existing Jerusalem fell short of this expectation, and so there are both exhortations to live accordingly and expressions of eschatological hope that God will bring about transformation that is physical and moral. The hope for the "kingdom of God/heaven" that includes the nations has present demands.

The Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11) which open the sermon on the mount have a number of links with Isaianic ideas: "Poor in spirit": 29:19; 61:1 (57:15); "mourn": 61:2-3; "meek": 26.6

LXX; "hunger and thirst for what is right/God's putting right": 1:17; chap 55; 62:1; and loose verbal links for receiving "mercy": 55:7; "clean/pure": 1:16, 25. Of note is the clustering of images in chapters 61-62 which deal with the coming of "light" to Zion and chapter 1 which is a call for change in the present lifestyle of the city. In the first eight beatitudes one sees descriptions of people who yearn for the future kingdom where all will be put right, linked with an anticipatory lifestyle that leads to opposition.

Significantly the final beatitude (5:11-12), which repeats the ideas of the eighth, shifts from the impersonal 3rd person to the direct 2nd person plural, "you", and the impersonal "righteousness" to "because of me". The persecution is said to have been the common experience of the prophets.

Again an Isaianic association may be cited. In Isaiah 49 the "servant" is ready to give up because of opposition from the people (49.4; opposition also in Isaiah 50:6-7; 51:7, and implied in 45:9-10; leading to 52:13-53:12), but instead is given a larger task, "to be a light to the nations" (49.6). "To be a "light of the nations" ... means bearing affliction and hardship—brought about on account of obedience to God—and precisely thereby conveying the knowledge of God. The witness leaves the final accomplishment to God, assured that affliction and hardship will be the means through which "my salvation shall reach to the ends of the earth".

Matthew 5:11-12 and 13-16 are closely tied together by use of the second person: "Blessed are you... You are the salt of the earth ... light of the world". In both Isaiah 49 and Matthew 5 persecution is followed by the appointment as "light". A similar juxtaposition is seen when Isaiah 49:6 is cited in Acts 13:47: Jewish opposition (v. 45) leads to preaching to Gentiles, "for so the Lord has commanded us...". At the beginning of Jesus' teaching in Matthew is a reminder and affirmation of witness through suffering and opposition.

Immediately one observes the emphatic "you" at the start of both v. 13 and v. 14. The use and position of *humeis*, you, ensures attention. These words would probably have struck most Jewish ears as being at least implicitly polemical for it is not the Torah or the temple or Israel that is the salt or light of the world, but Jesus' followers. Further, while the imagery of these verses is in the other synoptic gospels (Mark 4:21, Luke 8:16; 11:33), there it applies to Jesus' ministry. Matthew is unique in applying the image to the disciples.

It is commonplace, but important, to note that the image of "light" is corporate. Just as a city is people together for similar purposes, so the disciples together function as "light". The community aspect is reinforced by the simple fact that all of the attitudes of the beatitudes and the actions of the subsequent sayings can only be expressed in relationships.

Further, the light has been lit in order to be seen. It will not be hidden:

"Jesus' parable does not urge that one should not hide one's light under a basket but assumes one does not do this. The point of comparison is that God does not do such things either. God does not provide a lamp to enlighten the world only to snuff it out with a basket. God sends light to enlighten, and the disciples now have the function, assigned to Israel, to be the light for the world that otherwise will end up being cast into the outer darkness at judgment (8:12; 22:13; 25:30)". (David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel*, New York: Crossroad, 1993, 60)

The action and intention of God are similarly highlighted by Boring:

"The disciples do not generate the light any more than salt generates its own saltiness. The metaphors picture the church as having-been-lit, recipients of a light from which God is the source. They have been lit not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the world" (M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1995, 182).

The light is shone by the lifestyle of the community: the "good" that attracts.

The lifestyle of "good works", being "light", is not separate from the "righteousness" which the rest of the Sermon on the Mount illustrates. The association of "light of the world" and "righteousness", seen in Isaiah and in the structure of Matthew 5:3-20, enables us rather to see "you are light of the world" as the focal commission. The new righteousness has a missiological thrust.

Many have noted the centrality of the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon. Its opening language reminds one of the preceding references to "the kingdom of heaven": the first and last of the impersonal beatitudes (5:3, 10), and "your Father in heaven" (5:16). The petitions, "Our Father in heaven, Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven", have phrasing that occurs in the conclusion to the Sermon concerning those who do (or do not do) "the will of my Father who is in heaven" (7:21), a will which is then equated with "hear(ing) these words of mine and act(ing) on them" (7:24, 26).

The Lukan parallel to Matthew 7:21, Luke 6:46, speaks only of Jesus' words, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you?" Matthew's wording reinforces the link between desire for the kingdom and obeying Jesus. The disciples are those whose desire for the coming kingdom and giving glory to "our Father in heaven" means seeking to do the ways of the kingdom now, made explicit in the words of Jesus, and in so doing they are "light of the world".

The reader of 5:13-16 will remember 4:16:

"...the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

This commission to the disciples corresponds to the mission of Christ himself. Matthew 4:16 is a magnificent statement describing the beginning of Christ's ministry as being the fulfilment of the announcement of "light" coming to "Galilee of the nations" (Isaiah 9:1).

The narrative of chapters 1-4 has, as its first and last Old Testament citations, passages from the beginning and end of Isaiah 7-9 (7:14 and 8:23-9:1, in Matt 1:23 and 4:15-16 respectively). This double citation, related to the Assyrian threat in the time of Ahaz, influences the hearing of the whole Gospel, evoking "a situation of imperial threat, thereby establishing an analogy with the situation of the Gospel's authorial audience, also living under imperial power... and also promised God's salvation (1:21)". Prophets "keep alive visions of a different order which challenges the claims made by powers such as Syria-Israel, Assyria, and Rome... Matthew 2 will narrate the thwarting of the murderous plans of Herod, vassal king of the Romans". But how will "the land of Zebulun and Naphtali", which is now experiencing "institutional injustice" be set free, enjoying "light"? One must read the narrative that follows! Along the way to his death and resurrection and the

announcement that "all authority on heaven and earth is given to me" (28:19) Jesus "creates a community... that recognizes and anticipates the full establishment of God's empire over all" (Warren Carter, "Evoking Isaiah: Matthean Soteriology and an Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 7-9 and Matthew 1:23 and 4:15-16", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, 2000, 507 - 519).

Thus, the reading together of two "light" passages (4:16 and 5:13-16) involves the disciples in living now the reign of God as a foreshadowing of the full coming of "light".

Further, the opening chapters, from the beginning, have an inclusive note. Jesus, as well as being "son of David", is also "son of Abraham":

"The theme of the 'son of Abraham' is more subtle.

...Matthew is very concerned with justifying the coming of large numbers of Gentiles into Christianity. In 8:11, in commenting on the faith of the Roman centurion, Matthew will record Jesus' saying: 'Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.' In 3:9, ... Jesus warns them [the Pharisees and Sadducees] that God is able to raise up new children to Abraham. Thus, for Matthew the designation 'son of Abraham' may indicate that he is the seed of Abraham by whom 'all nations of the earth shall bless themselves.' This will be fulfilled in the second chapter of the infancy narrative when the magi (who are clearly meant to be Gentiles) come to pay homage to the King of the Jews." (Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah. Anchor Bible Reference Library*, New York: Doubleday, 1993, 67-68).

The narrative of the magi contrasts the resistance of Jewish leaders, those who know the Scriptures, with "Gentiles, those considered aliens to God's purposes, exhibit[ing] an openness to God's purposes (even through the instrumentality of their own craft) and an eager receptivity to the new king". (Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13 Word Biblical Commentaries*, 33a, Dallas: Word, 1993, 27)

Is it significant that while the Sermon on the Mount is said to be Jesus teaching "his disciples" (5:1), yet "the crowd" (*hoi ochloi*) also hear (7:28; see 5:1)? There is a similar dual audience implied in other discourses (13:1-2, 36; 23:1). There is an openness for all who will hear (13:9). After the Sermon on the Mount, we soon read the account of the centurion who is an example of many who "will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (8:5-13).

Here and Now

It is better to allow our lives to speak for us than our words. God did not bear the cross only two thousand years ago. He bears it today, and he dies and is resurrected from day to day. It would be a poor comfort to the world if it had to depend on a historical God who died two thousand years ago. Do not, then, preach the God of history, but show him as he lives today through you.

- "All Men Are Brothers" by Mohandas K. Gandhi.,
from Bruderhof's *Daily Dig*

The overall cohesion of Matthew is an outworking of what it means to be “light of the world”. There is a missiological thrust to all, living the ways of the kingdom, making it known to others, despite opposition. There is also the eschatological dimension, living now in anticipation of the future. Thus in the commissioning of the twelve, the message to be proclaimed (along with actions) is: “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (10:7). The petition of the Lord’s Prayer, in the middle of the sermon of the mount, “your kingdom come, your will be done...” is to be lived out now in words and actions that anticipate the future.

So one comes to the well-known concluding verses (28:19-20): the authority of the Lord, the commission to “make disciples”, and just as Jesus taught his disciples (5:1), so the new disciples are to be “taught to obey all I have commanded”. For the light to continue to shine, disciples need to be taught the “good works” that exemplify the “righteousness” that is characteristic of the eschatological city of God. This is a corporate activity.

God’s intention is that the light shine and not be hidden. It attracts (while also being opposed) through the beautiful lifestyle of the community of disciples, a lifestyle encouraged by the assurance of the coming kingdom and the authority given to Christ, an assurance that alternative powers and lifestyles will not last. Christ’s presence is assured till the end of the age.

Concluding Remarks

There are implications for the day to day life of the Church and its teaching processes. Alan Kreider (*The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999) argues persuasively that the church in the early centuries placed much emphasis upon the catechetical process, which covered “believing, belonging and behaving”, with much attention given to the gospel narratives and the sermon on the mount. He gives several citations showing that it was the lifestyle changes, the living of freedom as God’s people despite opposition, that was a key factor in the dramatic growth of the church. The lifestyle attracted, and led to words that ensured the glory was given to “your Father in heaven”.

With the changing context following Constantine the teaching of the lifestyle of Jesus and its implications for all Christians lapsed (although it resurfaced from time to time in various monastic groups). The controversies of the Reformation also meant in the West greater emphasis on what is to be believed rather than what is to be done, although the Anabaptist stream turned their attention to discipleship patterned after Jesus and his teaching.

There has also been continuing debate on how one is to interpret the sermon on the mount. David Bosch (*Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, 16. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991: 69) summarises major “misinterpretations”: that it is not for all Christians; that its purpose is to “expose our own inadequacy and sinfulness and cause us to put all our trust only in Christ rather than in our own ability to do God’s will”; that what counts is individual attitudes; and that it was only an “interim ethic”. He endorses the interpretation that, “in Matthew’s view, Jesus actually expected all his followers to live according to these norms always and under all circumstances”. He links the instruction of the sermon with Matthew 11:2, “the works or deeds of Christ”, culminating in the cross: The sermon “gets its true binding force only through the exemplary life, sufferings and death of the Nazarene who sealed its validity with his own blood”.

I would add a further dimension, namely the eschatological and missiological perspective which we have seen in the juxtaposition of hope for “the kingdom of heaven” and “righteousness”, and living now in light of the coming kingdom so that blessing may come to all “the world”. In Christ, the coming “light” has already begun to dawn, but that “light” can only shine in all the world through the disciples of Christ continuing the deeds of Christ in being that “light”, “to the glory of your Father in heaven”, foreshadowing by their corporate lifestyle the full glory that is to come.

Thus it becomes important that a major part of the church’s ministry be “teaching to obey all that I have commanded” (including the Sermon on the Mount). This will be done not only in sermon, but probably more importantly in group settings where Christians (who “believe” in Christ and are learning more of what that “belief” involves) meet to encourage one another (expressing Kreider’s aspect of “belonging”), grappling with practicalities of living this way in the world, sharing experiences, failures, struggles and joys (“behaving”). In this way the exhortation of Chun Chae Ok in her Presidential Address to the Xth IAMS International Conference can be implemented: “Mission is living the gospel teaching ... Words and acts are to be in unity” (“Presidential Address: Mission in a New Millennium.” *Mission Studies* 17, 1/2, 200, 33/34: 53).

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Anabaptism in Australia: Reconsidering the Options

NATHAN HOBBY

Anabaptism is a worthy historical curiosity for discussion at theological conferences. As a tradition, it is also an excellent resource to draw upon to reform and challenge evangelical and mainline churches. For these reasons alone, it is well worth holding onto.

Those of us in the Perth Anabaptist Fellowship (PAF) have all tried this option of working within larger churches, with some positive outcomes. Indeed, it was through the Schillings and the Packers’ Anabaptist influence at Murdoch Church of Christ that I was won over to Anabaptism. Important links and

contacts were made which have served us well a couple of years later when I heard of PAF and joined it.

However, trying to push a ‘normal’ church in the direction of Anabaptism - even where there is sympathetic leadership - has left us disappointed. It’s a little like communists working in the Labor party, if you can allow the comparison.

To me the nature of Anabaptism is such that we must take seriously the possibility of a third way beside historical curiosity and reforming from within - Anabaptism as a faithful model of church in Australia. For a tradition that takes ‘church’ so

seriously, it is incredible that we have been so reluctant to take up this option.

I want to make some comments about two distinct practices of the Anabaptist church - binding and loosing and the common meal* - to show that the formation of small, committed Anabaptist churches best enables Anabaptists to embody the beliefs and practices we talk a lot about.

Within such an Anabaptist Fellowship (AF), it is possible to practice 'binding and loosing' in a way that is impossible in a large church. Because binding and loosing only seems to work in smaller groups - say, less than thirty, but preferably less than twelve - the practice is abandoned by many churches. "If it's not compatible with big church it can't be right", the thinking goes. The ideas of the priestly nation, consensus, and discernment are at odds with most evangelical practice. A lot of evangelicals want 'strong' leadership in a management style; they want super-pastors who will 'perform' (in both senses of the word). They don't want the responsibility and commitment of discerning.

Alas, even in Baptist churches with their strong emphasis on the members' meeting, decision making tends to be seen not as a spiritual practice but a business practice, to be solved in common sense, secular ways.

Similarly, the practice of the common meal and of 'jubilee living' works best in a dedicated Anabaptist church. At Murdoch Church of Christ, just the idea of eating together every week or fortnight was a controversial one that was never able to be solved adequately. Within PAF, the experience of being able to practice this with broad agreement about its importance has been a rewarding, spiritually nourishing experience.

Neither is the formation of AFs necessarily divisive or 'sectarian' (in its pejorative sense). True unity, true Christian co-operation occurs not in persisting with particular traditional denominational structures; it occurs in fellowship, in sharing life and meals with Christians of different churches. PAF is truly 'ecumenical' in the sense that the recognition of our own tradition has freed us to, for example, visit a Uniting church as a group and work with Roman Catholics at the Christian Centre For Social Action.

There are times, undoubtedly, when there is an important role for Anabaptists to encourage change in existing sympathetic churches. However, what I challenge is the idea that this should be the 'normal' way for Anabaptists to serve in Australia. I believe it's better to start practising our theology communally in our own small way than trying to persuade others to take it up within existing wineskins. Indeed, the faithful existence of Anabaptist fellowships is the most convincing apologetic possible.

* [For more on the practice of "binding and loosing" and "breaking bread together" see Chapters One and Two in **Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World**, by John Howard Yoder, Herald Press, 2001.]

Perth Anabaptist Fellowship's (PAF) new weblog can be found at: <http://perthanabaptists.modblog.com>. We're hoping it will be a frequently updated record of upcoming events, discussion, and transcripts of teaching presented at meetings. Please visit and make comments on the entries (it's easy to do); as Anabaptists, we believe strongly in participation!

"Becoming locally explicit about Jesus" is the calling, task, and mission of the people of God in their particular contexts. The church's claim about the universal validity of the gospel is not warranted from on high by the powerful elites, whether politicians, religious leaders, or academics. It is warranted when the reign of Christ among his people becomes concretely and locally visible in many places around the world. "This is enough." Indeed, to wish and work for more is to reject the Pauline politics of witness and once again to take up the way of Constantine.

- Douglas Harink, *Paul Among The Postliberals*, Brazos Press, 2003, p. 248.

Report on work in progress:

Discovering Pilgram Marpeck, or the Anabaptist as Public Servant?

DOUG HYND

Some accidental browsing while waiting to talk to the librarian at St Mark's library brought to my attention in a way which has started to engage me deeply, Pilgram Marpeck, a significant figure in the early Anabaptist movement (1495-1556).

I started reading about him in a couple of photocopied articles from the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. I became increasingly fascinated and have started to accumulate a collection of material about him including English translations of his theological works.

My current project is to prepare an article around the theme of "the Anabaptist as a Public Servant". I am interested in retelling his story, focussing on the tensions and conflicts of

his life in his relationship to political authority, with an eye to its contemporary relevance to Christian discipleship and the exercise of Christian vocation as a public servant in Australia in the 21st century.

Getting hold of the relevant material has taken some time and I am still waiting for a couple of books. The article that I promised my friends in the fortnightly Faith/Work group that I am a part of is going to have to wait a bit longer. So this note is really a report on the project as a work in progress, which will explain a little about what has attracted my attention and what I have learned so far.

◆ The first point of interest is that Pilgram Marpeck was unlike many of the early leaders in both the Reformation and the

Anabaptist movement. He neither was a cleric nor was he a theologian by training. Yet he contributed to a number of extensive theological debates around critical issues and left a theological legacy that was more extensive than Menno Simons.

◆ Marpeck came from a family that was well off and active in the government of his community in Rattenberg. He was technically qualified and had an extensive career as a mining magistrate and municipal engineer in the Inn valley in Austria, Strasbourg, parts of Switzerland and in Augsburg over a thirty year period.

◆ Marpeck expressed in his life an unwillingness to accept unlimited state authority as it touched on issues of the life of the church. At the same time, he attempted to work, to the extent that he was able, to serve the welfare of the communities in which he lived in an official capacity.

◆ He was active in seeking ecumenical relationships and agreement with the mainstream reformers, maintained an active pastoral relationship with scattered groups of Christians across Switzerland and Austria, and developed his theology in a distinctly collegial manner.

There are a couple of things driving my interest in Marpeck's life and witness. One is that stories of Christians as public servants are rare. Biblically we have the stories of Joseph and the book of Daniel. There has been little direct reflection on the connection between Christian faith and the vocation of the public servant – the Zadok Institute's publication edited by Robert Banks *Private Values and Public Policy* is a rare exception.

There is not a lot of direct theological reflection on the connection between Marpeck's theology and ecclesiology and the shape that his life took, particularly in his engagement as a public servant in a variety of contexts over a thirty year period of political and religious turmoil. The theologians have been mainly interested in his theological controversies with other theologians.

We have been given his life and witness. The theologians have been interested in what he wrote. I am interested in the connections between his thought, how he lived his life and his practice of community.

One of the underlying theological issues at stake is the argument by many mainstream theologians that an Anabaptist ecclesiology and attitude to culture entails a withdrawal from engagement with the world and avoidance of social responsibility. I don't think there is a necessary connection. The paper I want to write is going to explore that by examination of the life and theological and ecclesiological commitments of Pilgram Marpeck.

The following bibliography is limited to accessible

English language references. I am now wishing I had kept up my German from high school. I have a collection of most of these references, including a couple that are on order overseas. I do not have the items with an asterix. Any assistance in obtaining photocopies of this material would be appreciated. A few of the citations of articles from the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* are not complete.

In addition to the items I have listed, there are a number of draft papers prepared for a conference on Pilgram Marpeck that was held in New York City in 2002. Some of the drafts can be downloaded from:

<http://www.marpecknyc.0catch.com/INDEX.HTM>.

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Packull, Werner O "Preliminary Report on Pilgram Marpeck's Sponsorship of Anabaptist Flugschriften" *Mennonite Quarterly Review* vol No :75-88.

*Rempel, John D. *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism: A Study in the Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier, Pilgram Marpeck, and Dirk Philips*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1993.

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Southall, David "Pilgram Marpeck: An Ecumenical Anabaptist?" *Anabaptism Today* Issue 24, Summer 2000, pp.20-27.

Pilgram Marpeck wrote the following in his "Admonition of 1542":
Christ says: whoever does not deny everything that he has is not worthy of Him (Luke 14:33). And Paul admonishes us to give our bodies as a living sacrifice which, he says, is our reasonable service, acceptable and well pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1,2). May our heavenly Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, give grace that all sincere people, through pure understanding and knowledge, may commit themselves to this sacrifice, for it is in the knowledge of Christ and the Father that eternal life consists.

- *Reading the Anabaptist Bible*, edited by Snyder and Peters, Pandora Press, 2002, p.156.

Institute For Healing Of Memories

We recently attended a presentation in Sydney by Fr. Michael Lapsley. Michael Lapsley was born in New Zealand and trained as a priest in Australia before moving to South Africa where he worked as an ANC chaplain during the apartheid years. He was exiled to Zimbabwe where in 1990 he opened a letter bomb and lost both his hands and one eye in the subsequent explosion. He now lives and works in Capetown as the Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories.

Over the last eight years, he has been offering healing of memories workshops throughout every part of South Africa and there's one issue which is brought to the table by the participants more than any other, and that is the issue of forgiveness. What is forgiveness? How do you do it? Is it possible? Should we forgive? Can I forgive myself for what I did or did not do during those years? "We are a nation still trying to come to terms with all of these questions. We are a nation trying to heal our individual and collective memories."

"As a country, as a people, we decided we couldn't take the historical option of forgetting and forgiving. Nor was it realistic to opt for Nuremburg process in which all those who had perpetrated great wrongs were brought to trial. Instead, as a country we are taking the option to remember and to heal. And I think that in some ways this decision, this commitment, has captured the imagination of the world.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has proposed a challenge to countries around the world to come up with their own ways of dealing with their country's past. There are important parallels between the experience of people in South Africa and people in the United States, in Australia, in Canada, in New Zealand, in the sense that all these countries have indigenous minorities as a consequence of colonialism and racism. There's an interlinking of issues that we share. This is a time in the world of confronting the genocidal effects of colonialism and racism. This confrontation is happening during our generation, our time on earth. I think it calls us to be part of acknowledging the truth of what happened, and to find ways to heal the memories and to create something different for future generations."

"I think it's fair to say that in South Africa most black people know they were damaged by apartheid and that processes of healing are required. I'm not sure that most white people know that they were damaged and also need to seek and play a part in healing, but there is no doubt that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission helped considerably in bringing to light the effects of apartheid on individuals, families and communities and the need to remember and to heal."

Lapsley talks about the "journey" from being a *victim* – to being a *survivor* – to being a *victor*. It is a journey from being an *object*, who had something done to you, to being a *subject*, one who does something. The Institute works at this through two-and-a-half day workshops.

The workshops use storytelling, drama, drawing, small group sharing, liturgy, clay creations, and celebration. Participants describe the experience as "one step on the journey of healing and wholeness" where you can "relieve yourself of baggage." It is an opportunity to "lay to rest those things from the past which will destroy us."

The Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory invited the Institute to do workshops in Alice Springs over a three year period to deal with the pain and anguish of "stolen generation" issues. They have also held workshops in Perth.

A video telling the story about healing of memories workshops has been produced. Learn more at www.healingofmemories.co.za.

By MSH

Peace in Our Time Begins with How We Choose to Live Our Lives

Many of us have recently been called into action, some for the first time, to work for peace only to find out that peace is a process rather than an end in itself. And while we may not have prevented the war, we still have much to do—in our personal lives, our communities, our nation and our world.

How can we create the world we wish to see? We can make conscious choices about the food we eat, the clothes we buy, the mode of transportation we choose, the resources we use. We can let go of resentment, anger and ill will toward one another, those in other lands, even those leaders whose actions we disagree with. We can awaken from the fantasies that advertisers and marketers would sell us and live lives of authenticity and fulfillment. We can work together for personal empowerment and grassroots democracy. We can enjoy the time we have on this planet. We can laugh and sing and dance and love together.

We are powerful. We are wise. We are resourceful. And if we stand together now we can create the vision we have for our world . . . beginning with our own daily lives.

- Bruce Mulkey, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 18, 2003 (North Carolina)

Another World is Possible

Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen...with our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe...Remember this: We are many and they are few. They need us more than we need them. Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.

- Arundhati Roy, Speech at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 28, 2003. from Bruderhof's *Daily Dig*

Oh, the folly of war. There isn't even the least bit of common sense to it... Returning from war, soldiers are generally ruined physically, mentally, socially, morally and spiritually. It seems like the world as yet does not see the folly of war... What does war mean? It means destruction of mankind, material and country...Christ, whose highest law is love, is the only remedy for war.

- B. Charles Hostetter, Mennonite Church leader, 1937, (February 18, 2003, *The Mennonite*, 15)

...followers of Christ have something to say to the world only to the extent that they can produce communities which embody a distinctive way of life.

-*Anabaptist Ways of Knowing*, Sara Wenger Shenk, Cascadia, 2003, p. 17

Christianity's historic origins do not lie in an abstract concern with isolated issues of individual ethics but in a dedication to resist the idolatry of power embodied by the Roman Empire.

- Horsley and Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom*, 232.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once wrote, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each person's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

- Quoted in *Blessed Are The Peacemakers*, Anderson and Mylander, Regal, 2002, p.138.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Challenge Of Jesus, Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is N.T. WRIGHT, INTERVARSITY PRESS, 1999

N.T. Wright is Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey, a New Testament scholar, and author of books like *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *The Original Jesus*, and *What Saint Paul Really Said*. This present volume comes out of a series of talks given at an InterVarsity Christian Fellowship conference. It provides a very readable summary of Wright's work on understanding Jesus. The Notes at the end of the book refer the reader to Wright's other books for further study.

Wright says "each generation has to wrestle afresh with the question of Jesus, not least its biblical roots if it is to be truly the church at all...we should discover more and more of who Jesus was and is, precisely in order to be equipped to engage with the world that he came to save." (31)

All the historical study about Jesus is meant "to energize the church in its mission to the world." (31) That is partly why this is a helpful book. Wright is not an ivory-tower scholar but one encouraging the church to take what it knows about Jesus and live it out in mission to the world.

The book is taken up with answering five questions:

1. Where does Jesus belong within the Jewish world of his day?
2. What, in particular, was his preaching of the kingdom all about?
3. Why did Jesus die?...what was his own intention in going to Jerusalem that last fateful time?
4. Why did the early church begin, and why did it take the shape it did?...what happened at Easter?
5. How does all this relate to the Christian task and vision today? (33)

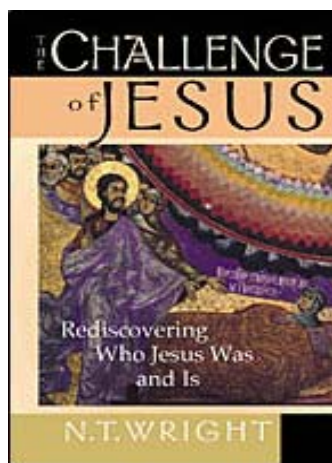
The bulk of the book is about the first three questions and less so the latter two. Wright does a good job of placing Jesus in the first-century Jewish context and asking questions from there. He argues that "most first-century Jews believed that the exile was not really over." (159) In one of his notes on chapter two he cites Daniel 9:2, 24 to show that the exile was not to last seventy years but "seventy weeks of years" that is, 490 years. Jews in Jesus' time were looking for a Messiah to lead them out of exile.

Wright takes time to look at some of the parables from this perspective of exile. It gives them a new meaning. The Prodigal Son story in Luke 15 becomes "the story of exile and restoration." Wright says "Jesus told the story to make the point that the return from exile was happening in and through his own work." (42)

The picture we get of Jesus is "not so much like a wandering preacher preaching sermons, or a wandering philosopher offering maxims, as like a politician gathering support for a new and highly risky movement." (42) When Jesus told people to "repent and believe in me," he "was telling his hearers to give up their agendas and to trust him for his way of being Israel, his way of bringing the kingdom, his kingdom-agenda." (44)

Like the prophets before him, Jesus was calling Israel back to its true vocation. "To take up the cross and follow Jesus meant embracing Jesus' utterly risky vocation - to be the light of the world in a way the revolutionaries had never dreamed of." (47)

Wright looks at Jesus' clash with the Temple system and all that it represented. He says "during his Galilean ministry, Jesus acted and spoke as if he was in some sense called to do and be what the Temple was and did...He was undercutting the official



system and claiming by implication to be establishing a new one in its place." (65)

"He believed that the time had come for God's kingdom to dawn and that with it a new agenda had emerged diametrically opposed to the agenda that had taken over the symbols of national identity [ie. the Temple] and was hiding all manner of injustices behind them." (67)

One question that Wright deals with is "Did Jesus

know he was God?" He gives an interesting answer that I will let you discover as you read the book. The helpful thing he does though is that he turns the question around. We often develop a picture of God and then try to fit Jesus into that construction. He says:

Instead, I suggest that we think historically about a young Jew possessed of a desperately risky, indeed apparently crazy, vocation, riding into Jerusalem in tears, denouncing the Temple and dying on a Roman cross - and that we somehow allow our meaning for the word god to be recentered around that point. (123 -124)

After a chapter examining the resurrection Wright looks at "Walking To Emmaus In A Postmodern World." He does a good job of putting the Emmaus Road story into its context and then bringing it into our postmodern setting.

As Christians, we should not shy away from mission in our context. Wright argues that we should "be in the front row of constructing the postmodern world" and should be providing "what is missing from the postmodern equation... love." (170)

Like Israel, we are called to be the light of the world. "...Our task is to *implement* his [Jesus'] unique *achievement*. We are like the musicians called to play and sing the unique and once-only-written musical score." (182) Instead of the modern emphasis on money, power and sex we should be calling the world to "relationship, stewardship and worship." (183)

The preacher in Wright comes out in his challenge to us to be the light of the world in his final chapter. All I can say is AMEN.

"The foundation has been laid. The garden has been planted. The musical score is written. The principalities and powers that kept us in exile have been defeated; they need reminding of this, and we need reminding of it too, but it is a fact - if it isn't, the cross was a failure. Our task is to build the house, to tend the garden, to play the score. The human race has been in exile; exiled from the garden, shut out of the house, bombarded with noise instead of music. Our task is to announce in deed and word that the exile is over, to enact the symbols that speak of healing and forgiveness, to act boldly in God's world in the power of the Spirit." (185)

From reading this book, I thought Wright would be a pacifist. I asked Chris Marshall about this. Wright lectured in New Zealand and stayed in Chris's home. After a late night discussion on pacifism, Chris says:

His historical portrait of Jesus very much casts him as a

non-violent prophet, so much so that you would think pacifism is the logical implication for those who claim to follow Jesus today. But Wright doesn't draw that implication (he is pretty much a standard Anglican just warrior), though his close friend Richard Hays does.

Maybe some day he will see the logic of his presentation of Jesus and realize that the non-violent prophet Jesus is a reflection of his non-violent Father. I hope so.

- REVIEWED BY MSH

[For a critical look at Wright's view on Israel read Douglas Harink, *Paul Among The Postliberals*, Brazos Press, 2003, pp.168-184]

Biblical Pacifism **SECOND EDITION, DALE** **BROWN,** **EVANGEL PUBLISHING** **HOUSE, 2003.**

The historic peace churches are the Mennonites, Quakers and Church of the Brethren (sometimes just called the Brethren). While Quakers and Mennonites have a presence, albeit a small one, down under, the Church of the Brethren does not.

The website for the Church of the Brethren (<http://www.brethren.org/>) has this introduction:

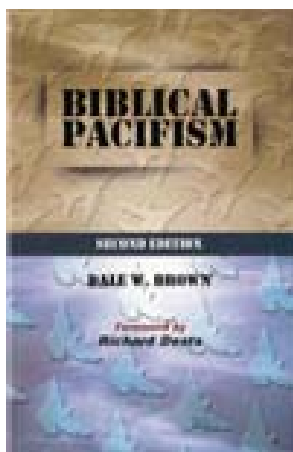
If you've fished all night and caught nothing, try another way. From the shore, Jesus looked across the water and saw that his friends had caught no fish. He called out, "Cast your nets on the other side of the boat." Then he went back to the fire, to the breakfast he was preparing. He knew that within moments, there would be plenty of fish to go around.

For almost 300 years the Church of the Brethren has tried to do as Jesus did. To notice need. To help. To welcome, and to share. To replace the night's emptiness with a new morning of abundance. Brethren believe there's enough to go around. And we try to help that happen.

The Church of the Brethren welcomes you to another way of living: the way of Jesus.

The Brethren emerged in eighteenth century Europe during a time of strong governmental control of the church and low tolerance for religious diversity. Nevertheless, there were religious dissenters who lived their faith in spite of the threat of persecution. Some of these dissenters found refuge in the town of Schwarzenau, Germany. Among them was Alexander Mack, a miller who had been influenced by both Pietism and Anabaptism.

In circumstances similar to the first Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, in August 1708 five men and three women gathered at the Eder River in Schwarzenau for baptism, an illegal act since all had been baptized as infants. They understood this baptism as an outward symbol of their new faith and as a commitment to living that faith in community. An anonymous member of the group first baptized Mack. He, in turn, baptized the other seven. This new group simply called themselves "brethren."



Due to growing persecution and economic hardship, Brethren began emigrating to North America in 1719 under the leadership of Peter Becker. Most Brethren left Europe by 1740, including Mack, who took a group over in 1729. The first congregation in the New World was organized at Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1723. Soon after its formation, the Germantown congregation sent missionaries to rural areas around Philadelphia. These missionaries preached, baptized, and started new congregations.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the Church of the Brethren had about 135,000 members in more than 1,000 congregations in the United States and Puerto Rico; about 150,000 in the fast-growing Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria); and hundreds more in the Dominican Republic and Brazil

The author of *Biblical Pacifism* is a former professor of theology at Bethany Theological Seminary, the Church of the Brethren's graduate school of theology. He wrote *Brethren and Pacifism* in 1970, revised it in 1986 as *Biblical Pacifism* during the cold war and its nuclear arms race. And now a complete revision has been done for this era where the latest wars are about "terrorism".

I read the earlier versions and thought "Oh no, another revision where nothing is really changed." I was pleasantly surprised. Brown gives us an up-to-date book that has no signs of being a reworked volume.

Brown shares from his Brethren background and his own experiences from the time of World Wars – "my childhood transpired between world wars" (15) - to the present. His broad knowledge of peace literature comes through and his summaries of current peace thinking makes this a valuable peace resource.

The Biblical material on peace is dealt with as well as the thoughts of John Howard Yoder, Walter Wink, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Glen Stassen, Rene Girard, Jacques Ellul, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and others. The book is an excellent introduction to some of the key thinkers of the present and recent past. It has a good bibliography to help readers go further in their study.

- REVIEWED BY MSH

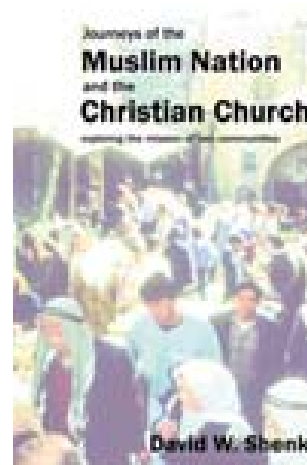
Journeys of the **Muslim Nation** **and the Christian** **Church**

DAVID W. SHENK,
HERALD PRESS, 2003

"This provocative work of comparative theology from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective will stir both Christians and Muslims to further dialogue and deeper reflection on the character of their faith in God."

—Jon Hoover, *Dar Comboni for Arabic Studies, Cairo, Egypt*

David Shenk is known to a number of AAANZ members through his writings and his visits to Australia as the representative of Eastern Mennonite Missions. Shenk attended



the 1995 inaugural gathering of Anabaptists held in Sheffield, Tasmania. He grew up in a missionary family in Tanzania and has had an extensive career in mission work ever since.

This new volume takes up where his earlier *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (Herald Press, 1997) left off. The Herald Press website says this:

“This invaluable resource from David W. Shenk, an expert in comparative religious studies, examines Islam and Christianity at their deepest spiritual, cultural, and communal levels. It explores the similarities, and yet unavoidable differences found in Isaac and Ishmael, Jesus and Muhammad, the Bible and the Qur’an, Jerusalem and Medina, the Eucharist and the Hajj, the Church and the Ummah. Reflecting years of conversations and dialogue with Muslim friends, this is narrative theology, full of anecdote and personal experience that bridges the poles and builds understanding. Appropriate for university and seminary classes, this guide also includes study questions for small groups.”

I found this book to be an excellent introduction to Islam and the Islamic community. This is essential reading for those of us with Muslim neighbours, which means all of us in Australia and New Zealand. Besides the millions of Muslims in neighbouring Asian countries, over 200,000 Muslims live in Australia and around 24,000 in New Zealand.

So much of what we hear about Islam comes through slanted news accounts of Islamic fundamentalists and the “war on terrorism”. This book is an antidote to news hype and misinformation.

Shenk does not paint a picture of a perfect church and then compare Islam to it. He allows Muslims to point out our inconsistencies and challenge us with their words. Ahmad, a Muslim friend of Shenk’s says,

“Christians say that Jesus is Lord. Yet I have not yet met any Christians who obey the teachings of Jesus. They obey Jesus the Messiah only when it is convenient...If the law of the Messiah is love, then live that way!” (174)

Another complaint that Muslims often have is that the way of Jesus is not “practical” while the way of the Qur’an is. They again challenge us by saying:

“The great inconsistency within the Christian church is that you claim with your mouths Jesus is Lord, but your lives reveal that you really believe that Jesus is not practical. Your lives show that you agree with Islam, that the teachings of Jesus are an impossible ideal.” (173)

Are our lives demonstrating the way of love and forgiveness? Can people watch us and see the way of Jesus? Do we have something different to offer to the world? These questions and more emerge from a study of this book.

- REVIEWED BY MSH



War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning

CHRIS HEDGES, ANCHOR BOOKS, 2002

I don’t think I’ve ever read a more succinct description of war. The author is a veteran war correspondent who takes apart war and its supporting myths with clear and often brutal clarity.

Here is some of what he says about war:

It forms its own culture, is a drug, and exposes the capacity for evil that lurks not far below the surface within

all of us. (3) War is a god...and its worship demands human sacrifice. (10)

War is organized murder (21), there is nothing redeeming about any war. (28) Blanket amnesia is often part of the aftermath of war: (60) States at war silence their own authentic and humane culture. (63)

Fear of the other...triggers war. (71) War turns human reality into a bizarre carnival and knocks us off balance. (74) Amidst the horror is also the seduction of the machine of war, all-powerful, all-absorbing. (89)

All wars feed off martyrs...it is the dead who rule. (94) In wartime, there is a nearly universal preoccupation with sexual liaisons. (100)

There is a spiritual collapse after war: (116) War teaches us not to trust. (121) Historical memory is hijacked (141)

The state and the institutions of state become, for many, the centre of worship in wartime. (147)

The prosecution of war entails lying. (149) The failure to dissect the cause of war leaves us open for the next instalment. (151)

The initial selflessness of war mirrors that of love, the chief emotion war destroys. (159) In times of peace, drugs are war’s pale substitute. But drugs, in the end, cannot compare with the awful power and rush of battle. (163)

When the mask of war slips away and the rot and corruption is exposed, when the addiction turns sour and rank, when the myth is exposed as a fraud, we feel soiled and spent. (164)

War is necrophilia. (165)

The state needs the myth [of war], as much as it needs its soldiers and its machines of war; to survive. (173)

With such an insightful view of war, I expected the author to say, “War is wrong. Let’s get rid of war.” But no, he says instead, “Despite all this, I am not a pacifist.” (16)

I groaned when I read Hedges was a former divinity school student. He learned his ethics from Reinhold Niebuhr. He says, “The poison that is war does not free us from the ethics of responsibility. There are times when we must take this poison – just as a person with cancer accepts chemotherapy to live.” (16)

Hedges equates pacifism with doing nothing in the face of great evil. He makes the same mistake that Niebuhr and others have made thinking there are only two options - kill or do nothing.

Jesus calls us to be peace-makers. We do not give in to evil and give up responsibility but we also refuse to fight evil with evil. Only good can overcome evil.

It amazes me that someone who has seen so much war and can describe it so well comes out where he does. Despite that, I highly recommend this book.

- REVIEWED BY MSH

Critical Issues in Restorative Justice: Advancing the Agenda in Aotearoa New Zealand

EDITED BY SHIRLEY JULICH, CENTRE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE DEVELOPMENT, MASSEY UNIVERSITY AUCKLAND, 2003

This report summarises the outcomes of a series of conferences/hui in 2002 among practitioners, policy makers, and academics on critical issues facing restorative justice. These issues include accountability, ownership and leadership; practitioner-related issues; indigenous traditions and the spirituality of restorative justice; restorative justice in schools; victim-related issues; offender-related issues; human rights abuses and restorative justice; and defining restorative justice.

Each section of the report is introduced by Howard Zehr and ends with his reflections on the discussion. But the principal contribution lies in the recording of the “conversations” among participants, liberally supported by direct quotes that capture the depth and range of feelings generated by the topics. The focus of the report is undoubtedly on New Zealand, but its findings are of wider significance. And since we have gone further than most countries in implementing restorative justice, these conversations have some authority. In a short review, I can do no more than pick out a few of the themes which are universally relevant.

While recognising there is no single method of delivering or defining restorative justice, concerns are expressed about the danger of dilution. Any programme can claim to be “restorative”, and this often happens as a way of accessing funding. The answer, it is suggested, lies in clearly expressing

New Book Paints Portrait of Global Anabaptist Family

Strasbourg, France — A new book offering a portrait of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the world through colour photographs, stories and art was released on November 3. The book, *In God's Image: A Global Anabaptist Family*, is “a labour of love” by Ray Dirks, writer, photographer and designer.

Dirks accepted invitations to visit 17 countries on five continents where there are Mennonite World Conference-related churches to gather the material. For two years, he visited ordinary people in cities and remote villages to capture their story with camera, pen and a passion to see all people as equal in the eyes of God regardless of ethnicity, age or economic status.

“I always made a point of staying with my host families wherever I went. I wanted to get a glimpse of their lives, not their country’s hotels and hostels,” said Dirks. The book also includes reproductions of art Dirks collected in his travels.

Each country’s segment in the book begins with a map and some facts about the country and the MWC-related churches there along with “Family stories.” Dirks gives some personal reflections in the preface and Larry Miller, executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference, which endorsed the project, sets the context in his foreword. A world map shows how the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ population is distributed in 2003. But most of the book’s nearly 150 pages are devoted to pictures.

The book is published by Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania (USA) in cooperation with Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery and Mennonite World Conference.

the critical values and principles which underpin restorative justice. These include respect, humility, co-operation, cultural sensitivity, honesty, integrity, love and interconnectedness. This leads to discussions about the need to reflect these values and principles in a nationally accepted code of practice. Yet there is also concern that such a code could prevent variations in practice and facilitate further State control.

Another universal theme is the interface between the State and the community. There is agreement about the need for the State to resource community programmes properly. But an important caveat is introduced. Once community-based programmes are primarily funded by the State, they become less accountable to their own community. Getting the balance right is crucial.

A common question is whether or not restorative justice can be used for all kinds of offending. Concern is expressed about “gate-keeping” practices that exclude too many cases from restorative processes. There is discussion about whether lack of remorse should be a barrier to a restorative meeting. Some even expressed support for compelling offenders to attend restorative meeting if victims wanted these to happen. The opposite (perhaps more common) scenario is not discussed - where an offender wants to participate but the victim does not.

Many other important questions are touched on in this report, such as how best to monitor agreements, pathways for improving the recruitment of non-European facilitators, and the feasibility of restorative prisons. Few definitive answers are provided to such questions. But that is no bad thing. The important task is to keep talking about them and this report provides a stimulus for that. It deserves a wide audience.

REVIEWED BY ALISON MORRIS (sent to us by Chris Marshall)

Peace is the Way; Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation

WALTER WINK, EDITOR, ORBIS BOOKS, NEW YORK, 2000



“Can we imagine a Europe that is entirely nonviolent, offering total resistance to Hitler, a Europe that the dictator and his police would have been unable to conquer?” asks André Trocmé. “We can” is his definitive answer (223). The story of Trocmé and the French community of Le Chambon during World War II speaks to the classic first question anyone asks of those debating the merits of nonviolence “...and what about Hitler?” Trocmé and the community of Le Chambon successfully hid hundreds of Jews from the French Police during the French government collusion with Hitler in the 1940’s.

History is written by the victorious goes the saying. Those with the power define who we are by choreographing the ghosts of the past in the pages of our history books. So conventional history books read like a series of events all leading to the inevitable wars that form its chapter markers. When a book comes out that offers not only an alternative view of history, but innovative examples of how history is changed, not by violence, but by nonviolence and the power of love, I take note.

The Fellowship Of Reconciliation (FOR) has been one of the 20th century's greatest organizations offering visionary leadership in dismantling the culture of violence which pervades the globe. Since 1915 FOR has been on the forefront of fostering nonviolent thinking, strategizing and action. FOR produces a journal that contains a wealth of examples and ideas for pursuing peaceful change through nonviolence. (For more information go to: <http://www.forusa.org/>)

The time to peruse 88 years of reading is beyond most of us even if we had access to the complete set of the FOR journals. Walter Wink has done a great service to the world of peace activism by compiling "the best of the best" articles from these journals into one volume entitled *Peace is the Way; Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation*. Most of the great nonviolence practitioners of the 20th century have written for the FOR journal. Gandhi, A.J. Muste, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King Jr., Jim Forest, Daniel Berrigan, John Dear, Elise Boulding, Henri J. M. Nouwen, Thich Nhat Hanh, Vincent Harding, Cesar Chavez, André Trocmé and Hildegard Gross-Mayr are represented in the pages of this book.

Wink divided the articles into six general categories which include: 1) The Vision for Peace, 2) Witness for Peace, 3) Spirit of Peace, 4) Interracial Justice, 5) Nonviolence in Action, 6) The Path of Reconciliation. With this outline, Wink gives each person, whether visionary, theorist, strategist, practitioner or historian, the kind of support they need to see the hope in active nonviolence as a force to be reckoned with in the world that has often forgotten the path to peace.

I highly recommend this book for anyone wanting to delve deeper into understanding and practicing active non-violent practice. - Reviewer: Jon Rudy

In the Presence of My Enemies

GRACIA BURNHAM, DEAN MERRILL, TYNDALE HOUSE, WHEATON, 2003

Martin and Gracia Burnham had been kidnapped for five months by the time our family arrived in the Philippines. Periodic news of their captivity was peppered through the newspapers and the almost daily promise by the Philippine military of their 'immanent liberation' rang hollow. Reading Gracia Burnham's account of their captivity, *In the Presence of My Enemies*, was especially interesting for me since the names, places and even details like Filipino foods or customs were familiar. It is written as a love story, love of God and her husband. While the book is not specifically about the Philippine military corruption and failings, there are many damning anecdotes to illuminate that reality.

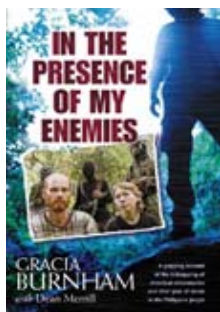
The faith of the Burnhams clearly sustains them through the ordeal. They had a strong sense of call to be in the Philippines and God chose to use them in ways they never dreamed. During the memorial service for Martin in Malaybalay, Mindanao, one of their assignment locations, the officiating pastor said that for years his mission's group had prayed about how to get missionaries into that area but it always seemed too dangerous. Yet, due to events not of their choosing, two devout Christians demonstrated their faith through their actions while engaging the Abu Sayyaf in occasional theological discussions. These two missionaries, literally chained to their kidnappers for

more than a year, were witnessing to God's love through discovering their own humanness! While the circumstances of their kidnapping seem to be random, after reading this book, I must confess that, in the long view, God works in mysterious ways through the most trying times.

Yet the book has value far beyond its inspirational content. For MCC teams or individuals working in areas prone to kidnapping, it can be a kind of 'how to' manual for surviving captivity. Important gleanings from the book include knowing what to expect. Burnham gives clues as to what kind of emotional and spiritual stresses can be anticipated. Although it would be different for each person and situation, I came away with the feeling that, in God's grand scheme of things, I would not be completely alone throughout such an ordeal.

What disappointed me about the book was the lack of connection between systemic and personal violence. To be sure the Burnhams were subject to humiliation, deprivation and, at times, torture. Through all this Gracia writes, "We never forgot who the bad guys were" (266). Bad guys . . . bad guys? Black and white thinking still permeates Gracia's thought processes after being freed. The larger connections to the terror of colonialism and the church's complicity are never made. The CIA funding of extremist Islam is off the radar screen. That the violence used to extricate them is connected to the violence that kept them captive is completely missed.

I hope I am never subjected to the kind of experience the Burnhams went through. Though now, after reading the book, I am more confident than ever that God's grace will meet me in that kind of tormented situation. The challenge, after reading such a sensational book, is to accept God's grace in the mundane of everyday events. - Reviewer: Jon Rudy



The most remarkable miracle is not the transformation of water into wine; it is the transformation of an enemy into a friend.

- James Forest, quoted in *Premeditated Mercy/A Spirituality of Reconciliation*, by Joseph Nassal, p.83

Anabaptist Preaching: A Conversation Between Pulpit, Pew, and Bible

EDITED BY DAVID B. GREISER AND MICHAEL A. KING, CASCADIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, 2003

(Copublished with Herald Press and developed in association with Eastern Mennonite Seminary Preaching Institute. Explore it in depth at: <http://www.CascadiaPublishingHouse.com/ap/ap.htm>.)

"Finally, an outstanding group of Anabaptist scholars freely offer the homiletical gifts of their tradition to everyone who has 'ears to hear.'"

- John S. McClure, Professor of Homiletics, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

In 14 chapters (plus study guide) ranging across such topics as postmodernity, hermeneutics, grace, doctrine, multiculturalism, power and persuasion, narrative, collaboration, and much more, the writers ponder the unique perspective on preaching offered by Anabaptism.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Reformed Guerrilla in Colombia: From Violence to Peace

BY RUDY AND HELEN BAERGEN WITH DAN DYCK

“The Lord is with me. I go where I want to go. I take classes at night. If I am killed, that too is within God’s plan,” says Raul (not his real name), a student at the Mennonite Seminary in Bogotá.

Before giving up his weapons, Raul had been an intellectual leader in the FARC (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia) movement. With three years of law school, he was put in charge of political and ideological training.

But Raul was restless and discontented with a life focused on destruction. Surely there must be a more noble purpose for him, he thought. These feelings eventually led to a personal transformation and faith in Christ; now he believes with conviction that God has a purpose for each person. He speaks eloquently of how God protected him, helped him to get out of the revolutionary forces, and is now using him to bring life to Colombia rather than destruction.

Seven years ago, Raul explains, the Colombian government introduced a program to encourage peace-seeking revolutionaries to re-enter society. But death threats from FARC and paramilitary AUC (Autodefensa Unidades de Colombia) combatants make re-entry difficult. Peace-seekers live in fear and must hide. Many are assassinated. Since living with their family puts everyone in danger, they often live lonely lives hiding in large cities like Bogotá. They are enticed or pressured to return to the cycle of violence by both sides. Raul himself was offered a good salary to work for the paramilitaries.

In the midst of this precarious existence, Raul received a vision to use his country’s generous capacity for fruit production to bring life and joy to people in Colombia and beyond. Out of this vision emerged a company called Flor Viva, or “Living Flower.” Flor Viva’s mission statement says: “We believe in ourselves, we believe in hope, we believe in life, the life that is generated by the land, the same land over which we wandered in a former shadowy existence. In such a way we transform the life produced by our campesinos, the fruit of their labour, into delicious pulp and juice for the delight of our society.”

Flor Viva produces juice and pulp out of some twenty fruits, all grown in the countryside of Colombia. The fruit plant has modern equipment and is fully compliant with health standards. A freezer has the capacity to store three tons of product.

Raul and his seven fellow employees, all former FARC members, several of whom are now participants in the Mennonite Church, face many challenges. The greatest of these is fear. When Raul deserted the FARC, he had an opportunity to leave the country, but he decided that God had a purpose for him in Colombia. His mother discouraged the idea of setting up a fruit factory; it would make him vulnerable; people would know where to find him. But the vision prevailed.

He says with a peaceful smile that he doesn’t have fear, despite the killings of several companions. With the breakdown in peace negotiations, Raul and his employees face even greater risks since they are accused of providing information to the military.

Raul speaks passionately about the fruit pulp project. Its success will show there is another way, that it is possible to leave

behind violence. The challenge now is to develop national and international markets.

Flor Viva hopes to sell the product to restaurants, hospitals, schools, and even the military, since the military is a major consumer of juice and fruit. Raul smiles at the thought of the Colombian military enjoying his life-giving fruit juice and chuckles, “Wouldn’t that be a delicious irony?”

- Rudy and Helen Baergen are Mennonite Church Canada Witness international workers. They teach at the Mennonite Seminary in Bogotá. This article is a Mennonite Church Canada news release.

- Peace Story is a monthly mailing of the Peace Story of the Month from the Peace Blend section of Third Way Cafe - To read the current Peace Story online visit http://thirdway.com/Peace/story.asp?S_ID=Current

BIC Church in Zimbabwe Will Raise Peace and Justice Concerns

The Brethren in Christ Church (BICC) in Zimbabwe has launched a Peace and Justice Committee in response to the church asking: “What is the BICC doing or saying about what is going on around us?” Bishop Danisa Ndlovu chairs the committee, which met for the first time on November 20, 2003.

Concerns for the committee to address, said Ndlovu, include alleged police brutality, beatings, killings, lawlessness and political violence, all of which leave deep physical, spiritual, and psychological wounds.

The committee began work on eight core responsibilities: 1) to intensify teaching the church’s peace position; 2) to assist in equipping members, especially leaders, with mediation and conflict resolution skills; 3) to articulate the church’s position on justice, fairness and to promote human dignity; 4) to monitor and speak openly against injustices in the country; 5) to encourage the church to assist victims of violence and injustice; 6) to liaise with other organizations with similar goals; 7) to initiate and enhance peace building in innovative ways; and 8) to release statements on issues of concern on behalf of the BICC Zimbabwe Conference.

The formation of a Peace and Justice Committee comes on the heels of a statement on Zimbabwe issued by the General Council at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 14 held in Bulawayo in August 2003. One Zimbabwe national newspaper published the statement and several other papers in Zimbabwe reported on its release. The statement was also distributed to the international Christian press and Mennonite and BICC publications worldwide.

Ethics of Biotechnology: Viewing New Creations Through Anabaptist Eyes

HARRISONBURG, Virginia - Eastern Mennonite University tackled an incredibly complex issue head-on. No easy answers were given, but much thought-provoking information and insight was offered.

Renowned researchers, educators and specialists from various disciplines gave presentations and fielded audience questions at a major conference, “Ethics of Biotechnology: Viewing New Creations Through Anabaptist Eyes,” held November 13-15 at Eastern Mennonite University.

This first-of-its-kind conference at EMU sought to integrate genetic advances in medicine and agriculture with insights from a variety of disciplines to provide ethical discernment for choices society is facing. The program looked initially at the promise of biotechnology, then at the ethical issues that emerge and finally drew on ideas from the Anabaptist tradition to address the ethical issues.

Undergraduate classes were cancelled November 14 to allow students and faculty to join the discussions with off-campus guests. Of the 1,110 people who registered, around 700 participated in various sessions.

John Gearhart, a genetic researcher at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland, set the stage with an address citing the promise of biotechnology to find cures for numerous diseases amid widespread public fear of developments in this field.

Dr. Gearhart focused much of his talk on research with stem cells, those cells that have not yet developed into a specific purpose in the human body and thus can be “trained” to take on new functions, such as producing new liver, muscle or brain cells. The promise of this research is that scientists may discover new miracle cures for life-threatening illnesses.

“Ninety-five percent of all biotechnical research already in progress is federally-supported,” the speaker noted. “There is tremendous power inherent in this technology. The question is who ultimately will control it?”

“Only an informed society can make wide decisions in this cutting-edge arena. We need the gathered wisdom of the community,” Gearhart added.

“We know much more today about our bodies and about the basic unit of life, DNA, but we still don’t know a lot about what causes certain diseases or malfunctions,” noted Dr. Leslie Biesecker, a senior investigator with the National Human Genome Research Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. “Genes do not determine our destiny but they are one major factor interacting in our environment,” he stated.

Biesecker has done major work on McKusick-Kaufman disorder, which is relatively common among Old Order Amish in certain communities. He noted that one in four Amish persons is likely to carry it and that newborns may have heart defects, urinary problems or extra fingers or toes.

The project has accelerated in the last few years in pinpointing the gene aberration to a single mutated gene as the cause, he said. The Amish are cooperating “because the goal of improving the health of the subjects is consistent with the cultural values of the Amish community,” the speaker said.

Carole Cramer, professor of plant pathology and physiology at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, focused on biotechnological developments in agriculture. She pointed out that many products the public already consumes are genetically modified plant and animal food sources and that about 96 percent of the crops grown in the U.S. are genetically modified - particularly, corn, soybeans and cotton.

Dr. Cramer gave illustrations from her research using tobacco plants in applications for improving health, with particular focus on an enzyme replacement for Baucher disease or Hurler’s Syndrome as well as a vaccine against amoebic dysentery in areas of poor sanitation.

The bad news is that distilling the vaccine “is very costly” along with problems related to and the problem of lack of regulation in some parts of the world, she said.

Conrad Brunk, a professor of philosophy at the University of Victoria, British Columbia and an ethicist who has worked for two decades in public policy in Canada, said: “We are able to do things now that were previously impossible. There is unprecedented power within biotechnology to redesign nature; an ability down the road to change our children into beings who could be morally and spiritually unrecognizable to us.

“What moral framework should guide this technology when the future could be unforeseen and even irreversible?” Brunk asked.

For Anabaptists, “biotech themes must be guided by sober humility and a strong emphasis on precaution coupled to a biblical injunction to relieve suffering,” Brunk declared.

While some oppose any stem cell research on moral grounds, LeRoy Walters believes that stem cell research is compatible with Anabaptist beliefs and desires to improve persons’ physical well-being and provides opportunity to relieving human suffering.

Dr. Walters, professor of Christian ethics at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University, outlined various convictions regarding the moral status of a five-day-old human embryo: there is no human soul before 40 days, Aristotle said; Jewish and Muslim traditions claim no duty to protect embryo or fetuses before 40th day of development; Catholic and Eastern Orthodox faiths believe the embryo must be protected from time of fertilization on; and Protestant stances “run the spectrum.”

In research aimed at finding ways to treat incurable diseases, Walters believes that special consideration should go to “the weakest and most vulnerable” - victims of Parkinson’s disease, spinal cord injuries and diabetes sufferers.

Ruth Schwartz Cowan, professor of history and sociology of science at the University of Pennsylvania, gave an overview of genetic research of the past 40 years and asked: “Have we already travelled down the ‘slippery slope’ in genetic manipulation and where does the slope end?”

For some, it is eugenics, which includes encouraging “better” people to reproduce more and prevent those who carry a genetic “taint” from reproducing - “that’s what some of us fear the most,” Dr. Cowan said.

Several speakers sounded a note to “promote justice in the entire world” in making new treatments available, not just in technologically advanced societies. What is needed, many agreed, is “a framework that is manageable and also speaks to fair and equitable access to new technological advances.”

Interestingly, every keynote speaker used current technology, including Powerpoint presentations, in outlining their material, but each one experienced technical problems in making them work properly.

The concluding Saturday morning sessions sought to build on earlier presentations blending the medical and agricultural strands into an Anabaptist quilt of recurring themes.

As panellist Lawrence Ressler, academic dean at Roberts Wesleyan College and others noted: “Along with the much good inherent in biotechnology there is potential for great evil. The power concentrated within this field can lead to misuse and corruption.

“The community of faith must study the scriptures diligently and call those involved in this field, the researchers and the policy-makers, to pick up their consciences and pray for God’s wisdom,” Dr. Ressler said.

Joe Kotva, a former pastor who is executive director of the Anabaptist Center for Health Care Ethics, asked, "What does Christ ask of us - to be faithful. There is need for communal discernment before new options and choices become available."

With persons' heads already spinning, closing speaker Stanley Hauerwas knocked the props away from much that had come before, noting that he "has problems with the title of the conference itself - "Viewing New Creations With Anabaptist Eyes." Dr. Hauerwas is professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School.

"There is only one new creation, the church of Jesus Christ," Hauerwas declared. Do the 'new creations' of genetic research imply that God is not part of the picture?

"Don't look to society to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate technology," he said. "Society is morally incoherent."

Hauerwas also challenged the assumption that the primary goal of new technologies is to improve the quality of life.

"We don't fear God, we fear death," he said. "Death is a bad thing, so do everything possible to keep people alive."

Hauerwas issued a call to "recover the vision that the world is God's creation, and all things are created to glorify God. Approach biotechnology with reverence, pray before experimenting in the laboratory that what may be discovered is for the good of humankind - and don't necessarily do everything that we become capable of doing."

"The conference had excellent balance between fact and opinion, information and speculation and boldness and caution," Elmer E. Kennel, a Harrisonburg surgeon and EMU alumnus, said afterwards. The keynote speakers were fantastic, and their presentations could be understood by the diverse group who attended.

"One of the most powerful challenges I received was the comparison of biotech knowledge to the parables of Christ," Dr. Kennel noted. "Hiding this knowledge and not using it may be more unchristian than embracing it, even though all implications and long-term results can be known. Christians just naturally behave in ways that help those in need," he added.

"For the most part, Mennonite theologians and ethicists have not thought seriously or written much about the broad issues of bioethics," said Roman J. Miller, professor of biology at EMU and a primary organizer of the conference. "This is unfortunate, since I believe these issues will become major societal problems during the next decade.

"The conference raised important issues and questions but also revealed that meaningful answers can only emerge with further understanding and discussion," Dr. Miller added. "I hope the Anabaptist community can provide helpful prescriptive guidance as decisions and policies are being made rather than reactionary responses after procedures are in place and routinely practiced."

Conference sponsors along with EMU included Mennonite Mutual Aid, the Anabaptist Center for Health Care Ethics, Guesthouse Inn of Harrisonburg, the Lilly Foundation, the Merck Company Foundation and Mennonite Central Committee.

Proceeds from the conference will be published in book form in late 2004 or early 2005.

Audiocassette tapes of the conference are available at \$5 US each or the entire series of nine cassettes for \$35 US. Video tapes are also available at \$30 US each or all sessions for \$120 US. Both can be ordered by contacting Cheryl Doss, EMU, Harrisonburg VA 22802, USA, or e-mail: dosscc@emu.edu.

MCC School Kits in Afghanistan

AKRON, Pennsylvania — After years of war and extremely low school attendance during the Taliban regime, ill-equipped schools in Afghanistan are overwhelmed by students eager for the educational opportunities they had missed out on for so long.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is responding by providing 7,500 school kits through its partner Help the Afghan Children.

"The extent of war and internal conflict in Afghanistan over the last two decades has virtually devastated the educational infrastructure of the country," according to Help the Afghan Children.

The organization reports that most children in school in Afghanistan today study in "shelter-less" schools, meeting in tents, under trees or in the entryways of homes. Where buildings do exist, the student to teacher ratio can reach as high as 200 to 1. In addition to the lack of schools or teachers, there is a severe shortage of supplies.

School kits will be provided to all of the schools sponsored by Help the Afghan Children, including the Abdullah bin Omar Primary School in Paghman.

Abdullah bin Omar Primary School opened its doors to the community in March 2003. It is one of the only reconstructed primary schools in the district — and now has 734 students. There are 20 teachers, 10 male and 10 female, for the 350 boys and 384 girls.

MCC now supports the school with stipends for teachers, salaries for on-site staff, funds for the upkeep of the school and a small supply budget. MCC's Global Family Sponsorship program helps with students' tuition and also provides funds for Help the Afghan Children's teacher training program.

Already, 1,664 school kits have been distributed to this school and in the Nejrab Girls School. According to Omar Qargha, assistant director for Help the Afghan Children, that distribution "has helped strengthen the confidence of the local community that reconstruction is a reality, that there are people around the world who are committed to helping the Afghan people chart their way towards sustainable development."

"In Afghanistan's long road to reconstruction we measure our success one child at a time," wrote Qargha. "With your continued support we hope to empower the children of Afghanistan with the most powerful tool...education.

It started with a shoeshine boy

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the Germany agency Architects for People in Need — spurred by the plight of 13-year-old Hussein Talib — have launched a push to re-ignite adult schools that provide vocational training to students who cannot attend regular classes.

Two years ago, Hussein Talib came into the office and home of Architects for People in Need (APN), searching for customers whose shoes he could shine. His father had left, so he and his two brothers were working to feed the family — which meant they could not, and probably would never, go to school.

Hussein's ready smile captured the attention of APN's head of mission Alex Christof and deputy head of mission Andrea Hilger. "He was in a situation that was, by all accounts, depressing and unworkable. Yet he was full of life, and very optimistic about his future. This touched Alex and Andrea — and Hussein's optimism and hope became a self-fulfilling prophecy," said MCC worker David S. Pankratz.

When asked what he wanted to be, Hussein, staring at the television, said he'd like to be a TV mechanic. Soon Alex and Andrea asked him to come two times a week to shine the shoes of the entire staff.

Wondering if Hussein was willing to learn, Alex began testing him — asking how many shoes he had already cleaned. He soon learned that Hussein could not count to 10. He taught Hussein his numbers, then how much money should be paid. Alex and Andrea soon became involved in helping Hussein pursue his schooling.

"The difference could be seen in his eyes as his situation improved, and the promise of schooling came closer and closer to reality," Alex noted.

Hussein spoke often to Intisar Aljubari, APN's education programs coordinator, asking repeatedly if APN could really send him to school. As he watched her two children, age 6 and 8, he noted they were already reading and writing. "I am always dreaming of that," Hussein said.

Yet no matter how eager Hussein was to learn, getting him into a classroom proved to be a challenge.

In Iraq, children who would be more than two years older than their classmates cannot attend regular classes. Those who had never been in school, like Hussein, would go to adult schools to learn primary level material and receive vocational training.

For many years in Al Kuraish, around 200 students were enrolled in the adult schools; many of these are now respected craftspeople in their communities.

But even before the war these programs were falling into disarray, with workshops closed due to neglect during the years of sanctions. Looting brought further damage.

As APN began searching for avenues to educate one 13-year-old boy, a single case grew into a project, a push to renovate these schools created to boost the level of education in Iraqi society.

Today MCC has committed \$86,000 U.S. for APN to renovate adult schools, beginning with Al Kuraish. And the genesis of what is becoming a million dollar project can still be seen in the handwritten name, Hussein Talib, on a white board in the APN office, in the boy who dashes in to show staff his textbook or something he has written.

Hussein takes his schooling seriously. He keeps his MCC schoolkit (one of more than 400 given out at Al Kuraish) with him. When Intisar bought him a soccer ball, he told her, "I have many things to write and many duties at home. I will only play with this on Fridays for two hours after I have finished my duties."

Although he doesn't always understand the teacher at school, he relishes the opportunity to learn, to write as his neighbours and friends do. "I feel like I am another person now," Intisar remembers Hussein saying.

Alex piped in, "When he started to come to APN regularly he started to change. He now has dreams and hopes for the future. We see him sometimes now in a mood as if he is planning to himself. He has a totally different self-confidence — it was there before — but now it is different, more solid."

And his plans for the future have changed a bit as well.

"I can't return to be a shoeshine boy again," he said.

"When you grow up, is it still mechanics or maybe..."

asked Alex.

"Well engineer would be nice, or a doctor," Hussein replied.

The Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

The purposes of the Association are:

- To nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.
- To network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.
- To provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.
- To provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.
- To convene conferences and gatherings which provide opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.
- To extend the awareness of Anabaptism in Australia and New Zealand assisting individuals, churches and groups discover and express their links with the Anabaptist tradition.
- To provide an opportunity for affiliation for churches and groups who wish to be known in Australia and New Zealand as Anabaptists.

What is Anabaptism?

Anabaptism is a radical Christian renewal movement that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Whilst Anabaptism was a grassroots movement with diverse expressions in its early development, its enduring legacy usually has included the following:

- Baptism upon profession of faith
- A view of the church in which membership is voluntary and members are accountable to the Bible and to each other
- A commitment to the way of peace and other teachings of Jesus as a rule for life
- Separation of church and state
- Worshipping congregations which create authentic community and reach out through vision and service

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