



ON THE ROAD

Newsletter of the
*Anabaptist Association of
Australia and New Zealand Inc.*

No.24 SEPTEMBER 2004

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**... to be devoted to
Jesus is to live a life
committed to non-
violence, forgiveness
and peacemaking...
God is in the process
of restoring,
renewing and healing
the world and the
task of Christians is
to participate with
God in this
restoration.**

**- Reality, 64 August/September
2004, p14**

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On The Road

The AAANZ quarterly newsletter publishes news, articles, book reviews, and resource information. It is published online with a paper edition available for those without computer facilities.

(Paper edition A\$20 per year) To be added to the mailing list write :

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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**

Mary writes about a recent bus trip home from Canberra:

I just wanted to relax in one of those two front seats with the extra leg room and the large windows on three sides during my bus ride home from our daughter's, Moriah. We were running late consequently when I got in line I could see that there was already someone in one of the seats. I figured that the other would be filled before I got on but it wasn't and that may have been due to the rough, scruffy looking man in the other seat. I didn't care and sat down ready to read or look around but God had other plans.

It never ceases to amaze me that a connecting question or two and folks willingly start talking; this man was no different. Within fifteen minutes, while he was sharing bits of his life, problems with drugs and alcohol, a prison sentence commuted to community service and fear in his attempts to educate himself later in life, I mentioned my concerns when I returned to study after finishing my undergrad degree 25 years earlier. After he asked what I had studied and found that I was a Christian, he said, "We were supposed to have this conversation."

Our conversation filled the three hour trip with him sharing some of his journey. He had made some poor choices earlier in life but was attending AA, trying to turn his life around, doing readings, praying, and attempting to do good each day.

He wasn't sure about Jesus or the church but definitely believed in God. His girlfriend is attending a church and he was just thinking that he should go along with her to learn more.

Before that could happen, her pastor told her to drop him since he wasn't a Christian. What a turn off, now he didn't know if he would ever go, he felt judged so harshly.

Among other things, I shared that to me, Jesus was the best example sent by God of how to live on earth and how to connect with God. The church is the place for us to support each other in trying to connect and walk with God.

It was a treat for me to see God at work in this man and be able to join in. I was also made so aware that often we Christians push folks away before we know what God is doing in them.

Mark recently read about an Australian rancher who had no fences but dug wells to control his cattle. They wouldn't wonder far from the well since the water from the well was life giving. Maybe as Christians in churches, we should build fewer fences that keep people out and dig more wells to share the life-giving water drawing others to God.

The story about wells and fences is cited in our book section where we feature a number of titles from New Zealand. The NZ part of our network gets the short end of the stick in our newsletter so we are featuring a number of items from Aotearoa this month. We are also preparing for a trip across the Tasman mid-November to early December. If any of our Kiwi readers would like a visit, please let us know.

Registration material for our January conference is available on our website. This issue includes the normal mix of articles, reviews, and news. Enjoy!

The Micah Challenge Vision

[The information below is from the Micah Challenge website <http://www.micahchallenge.org>. Some of you may remember meeting Michael Smitheram, the International Coordinator for this campaign, at the Melbourne AAANZ conference several years ago. Michael is a member of Canberra Baptist Church. The Micah Challenge is an excellent way to address world poverty so we encourage your involvement in it and ask you to share this information with others.]

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the Micah Network are facilitating a global campaign to mobilise Christians against poverty.

The campaign aims to deepen Christian engagement with the poor and to influence leaders of rich and poor nations to fulfil their public promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015.

All 191 members states of the United Nations have promised to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The Goals include measurable, time-bound targets addressing poverty and hunger, education, maternal and child health, the prevalence of diseases including HIV/AIDs, gender equality, the environment, debt, trade justice and aid.

The goals are achievable, but not by 'business as usual'. Informing and involving civil society is critical to ensuring that governments keep these promises.

The measures of success for the campaign will be policy change and participation by Christians in the campaign. Progress towards the achievement of the MDGs is being carefully benchmarked and tracked by the United Nations Development

Program, while the contribution made by Christians will be indicated by a register of churches, organisations and individuals who have signed the Micah Call and participated in advocacy activities. The campaign will also raise awareness of, and track improvements in, direct contributions by Christian organisations towards achievement of the MDGs.

TIME

The Micah Challenge will be launched globally on October 15, 2004 in conjunction with the UN ceremony for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. 2004 will see the formation of the first group of approximately eleven National Campaigns. 2005 will include release of educational materials and participation in advocacy focused on events including the G8 and the UN Heads of State Summit. A further 15 national campaigns will be launched in 2005-2006. An annual global Micah Challenge Sunday will commence in 2005.

ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES

The advocacy objectives for the campaign will reflect both a prophetic tradition (the tradition of speaking out for and

with the poor that is deeply ingrained in the Bible) and the long experience of Christian organisations and churches working in partnership with poor communities. They will also be framed to link with broader civil society campaigns, particularly those focussed on the MDGs. The Micah Challenge is a foothold for a movement of Christians that will go beyond the MDGs agenda, but it sees the MDGs as a well-shaped tool and seeks to make a powerful contribution to their achievement.

The focus for civil society in the North is likely to be advocacy for the structural changes included under Goal 8 of the MDGs. Work on some of these has begun, most particularly the successful work of the Jubilee 2000 and subsequent debt and trade justice campaigns. In the South, advocacy will also focus on empowering the poor to play a greater role in shaping national planning to alleviate hunger, water and sanitation deficits, disease, illiteracy, gender inequality and environmental destruction.

The Micah Challenge will bring together knowledge experts, leaders and Christian communities to frame global advocacy objectives and specific national and regional objectives. High quality, in-language materials will be developed, particularly in response to the needs of local churches, who are seen as the primary focus and driver for the campaign.

ORGANISATION

The Council for the Micah Challenge has ten members drawn from the leadership of Evangelical Alliances and Christian relief and development agencies from around the world. The joint chairs are Gary Edmonds, Secretary of WEA, and Stephen Bradbury, Chair of the Micah Network and National Director of Tear Australia. The Council has appointed Michael Smitheram as International Coordinator for the campaign and have asked Tearfund UK to house the International Coordination Office.

BACKGROUND

The Micah Challenge is a joint project of the Micah Network and the World Evangelical Alliance and is inspired by landmark statements reached by both of these organisations in 2001.

The Micah Network brings together more than 270 Christian organisations providing relief, development and justice ministries throughout the world. The majority are community development agencies in the South. The Micah Network aims to:

- Strengthen the capacity of participating agencies to make a biblically-shaped response to the needs of the poor and oppressed;
- Speak strongly and effectively regarding the nature of the mission of the Church to proclaim and demonstrate the love of Christ to a world in need;
- Prophetically influence the leaders and decision-makers of societies to maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed and rescue the weak and needy.

The Micah Network's first International Consultation in Oxford in September 2001 developed the Declaration on Integral Mission. The Declaration sets out the biblical basis for the Micah Challenge. A key excerpt reads: "Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the

gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task."

The World Evangelical Alliance was founded in 1951, and now embraces about 3 million local churches in 111 countries. In structural terms, the WEA is a global network of 120 national and regional evangelical church alliances, 104 organisational ministries and 6 specialised ministries serving the worldwide church.

The General Assembly of 2001 reached the following resolution, which also provides a cornerstone for the Micah Challenge:

"As a global Christian community seeking to live in obedience to Scripture, we recognise the challenge of poverty across God's world. We welcome the international initiative to halve world poverty by 2015, and pledge ourselves to do all we can, through our organisations and churches, to back this with prayerful, practical action in our nations and communities. We believe ... if the poverty targets are to be met:

- There needs to be a commitment to achieve growing justice in world trade in the light of globalisation; this must recognise the role of trade, particularly in arms, that fuels conflict and causes widespread poverty and suffering
- It is vital that a new deal on international debt is agreed by the G7 leaders as a matter of urgency and carried through by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank

... we urge governments and financial institutions of both North and South to act decisively, transparently and with integrity to combat corruption ... taking the necessary steps to break the chains of debt and give a new start to the world's poorest nations."

SUMMARY

The Micah Challenge will bring a prophetic, powerful voice for and with the poor to global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and will empower ongoing church engagement with civil society and government on issues affecting the poor.



AROUND THE NETWORK

Chris Marshall Tribute

The current issue of *Reality* (#64 August/September 2004), the official publication of the Bible College of New Zealand (BCNZ), has one article where the author pays tribute to Chris Marshall and another by Chris on “*The Kingdom of God: Doing God’s Will On Earth as in Heaven*”.

In “*Another World is Possible*”, Mark Forman, a PhD student studying with Chris, talks about his personal journey.

...in the course of my wobbly walk, I have encountered many people who have seemed to know where they are going and have helped me to make sense of things. One such person for me is Chris Marshall. (13)

Forman goes on “to pay tribute to the contribution Chris has made to Bible College over the last nineteen years.” Chris is finishing his time at BCNZ to take up a position at Victoria University as Senior Lecturer in Christian Theology in the Religious Studies programme.

The article talks about Chris’s volunteer work in a community restorative justice programme. Chris’s book *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment* (reviewed in *ON THE ROAD* issue #14, December 2001) is mentioned and Forman says this:

Chris shows that to be devoted to Jesus is to live a life committed to non-violence, forgiveness and peacemaking...God is in the process of restoring, renewing and healing the world and the task of Christians is to participate with God in this restoration. (14)

One thing that makes Chris different is that “he asks questions of the New Testament which are not usually on the Christian agenda or which are not traditionally asked within the evangelical community.”

Strongly influenced by the Anabaptist tradition, Chris’ teaching at BCNZ has been less concerned with defending a particular doctrine and more interested in how we might read the New Testament in ways which help to create radical Christian communities. (14)

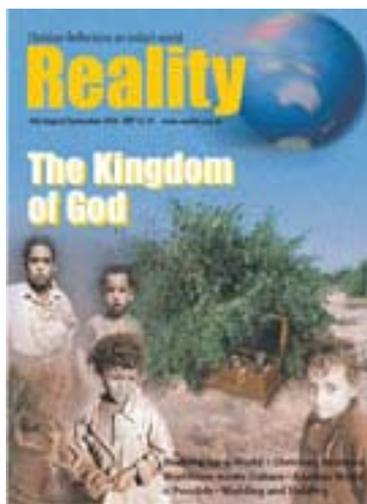
Forman recalls how Chris “walked beside me as a friend” when Forman went through a severe illness. He says:

It is rare to have a friend who is not only a creative scholar but who is also able to give unconditional kindness through the summers and winters of life.

Chris will be missed at BCNZ but on behalf of many other students, Forman ends by wishing Chris well for the next stage in his vocation.

On behalf of AAANZ, so do we.

MSH



Issue 64 The Kingdom of God

[Below are excerpts from a letter to the editors from Nathan Hobby.]

News From the Perth Anabaptist Fellowship

Perth Anabaptist Fellowship (PAF) is currently trying to define itself. For the Schillings, Duckhams and myself in PAF, we have had a basic agreement from the start of what it means to identify ourselves as an Anabaptist church. Of course, we’ve learnt heaps in the process, but we have been able to quite painlessly draft a statement of what it means to be a member. This has become particularly important because we are attracting several people who want to be involved, but don’t identify with the Anabaptist vision...

There are churchless Christians all over Perth who need to be called into deep fellowship...

To help in the evangelistic side of our mission, I am currently working on an Alpha-style *Introduction to Christianity, an Anabaptist Perspective*, which aims to simplify the insights of the Anabaptists and the writings of Yoder into engaging, simple language, complete with stories from our lives.

We’re also working on a short newsletter to let WA AAANZ members and interested people know what our church is doing.

[In the box on page five is a copy of the PAF draft statement for membership.]

A Classic Made Accessible

John Howard Yoder’s book *The Politics of Jesus* has become a classic and has reshaped the field of Christian theological reflection on social ethics. While it has been relatively widely read beyond the realm of academia it is not always easy going for some coming to theology without any real background.

Some young Perth Anabaptists have made a great effort to make Yoder’s work more readily available to a non academic audience. Nathan Hobby with help from James Patton has prepared a simplified summary, which was self-published by the Perth Anabaptist Fellowship in December 2003. Entitled *The Politics of Jesus: an Anabaptist Understanding of the New Testament: a simplified summary of John H Yoder’s classic book*, copies can be obtained from Nathan Hobby at savageparade@yahoo.com.au. The suggested donation per copy is \$12 (\$7 concession) plus \$3 if posted.

There is no doubt about it – this is a good summary and a really useful study guide. Nathan has got to the heart of the argument that Yoder was presenting and presented it simply and clearly. The confidence and competence in tackling significant issues in New Testament scholarship that is demonstrated in this summary of Yoder’s work is impressive. Yoder has been well served by the authors of this guide.

“At a time when the world needs the Christian community more than ever to live up to its God-given vocation in the world, many in the church seem to have, quite literally, lost the plot.”

- from the latest issue <http://www.reality.org.nz/index.php>

PERTH ANABAPTIST FELLOWSHIP: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER

We are a Christian house church identifying with the Anabaptist tradition. 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

We welcome seekers to our meetings, while encouraging people to consider membership. Members of Perth Anabaptist Fellowship support one another in their desire to live out their faith in accordance with the following practices:

1. Commitment to discipleship

We would rather be small than water down the demands of following Jesus. At all times we seek to be guided by the Bible, which is brought alive by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the congregation.

2. Binding and loosing

- Accountability to each other for our actions and decisions
- The responsibility to confess to each other and the authority to forgive
- The discernment of the body concerning God's will, and the desire to try to reach prayerful consensus in matters of importance.

3. All believers are priests

We believe in full participation by all members of the body. We are all equals. This means that we all help with tasks like washing up and discipling children.

4. Servant leadership

We believe that those who lead must also wash peoples' feet.

5. Peace and justice making

We are committed to making peace wherever we can and to non-violent resistance wherever we are called, in order that we might show God's Justice and love. We renounce all violence.

6. The common meal and simple lifestyle

We believe in the spiritual significance of the physical sharing of a meal as begun by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. We believe that just as we share our food with each other and with those in need, so we should share our goods, our time and our help in forging and maintaining a simple lifestyle.

What moved and excited me even more was the account of how this summary came into existence. The book was prepared as a weekly course to give an entry level account of what Yoder was talking about.

... we served a simple meal each week in the Christian Centre for Social Action, then read the weekly summary and then had a discussion. It was a modest course with often modest attendance and yet in these humble meetings we Perth Anabaptists felt greatly encouraged and moved.

You might like to run a similar course using this summary. The sharing of a common meal is very important to the kind of ideas expressed here. (Introduction)

The linking of study with sharing around a table suggested here by Nathan is exactly right and a critical way to embody the practice of communal reflection and discernment.

If you can find an opportunity to use this study guide with a group in the way suggested I would strongly encourage you to do so. This guide offers food for both discipleship and an opportunity to build the Christian community in its challenge to once again take Jesus seriously.

DOUG HYND

The Fur NATHAN HOBBY FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE PRESS, 2004

It must say something. Time was when you could rely on a young writer for sex-drenched earnestness. Nathan Hobby's first novel cuts straight to an earnest apocalyptic vision. A quasi-natural phenomenon called The Fur starts to take over Western Australia in 1972. At the same time, Michael Sullivan's father Jim

*begins to embrace fundamentalism. By the time Michael reaches year 11 at school, Western Australia has been quarantined from the rest of the world for as long as he can remember. The Fur is everywhere, apart from a few areas controlled by The Wealth. Michael's mother falls victim to The Fur, after which his father starts to have second thoughts about godliness. Michael wants to make a stand but he doesn't know what for. Nathan Hobby's imagination is hungry and intense. It needs a whole world to feed it and then some. (Michael McGirr, *Spectrum*, August 14-15, 2004, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, page 14)*

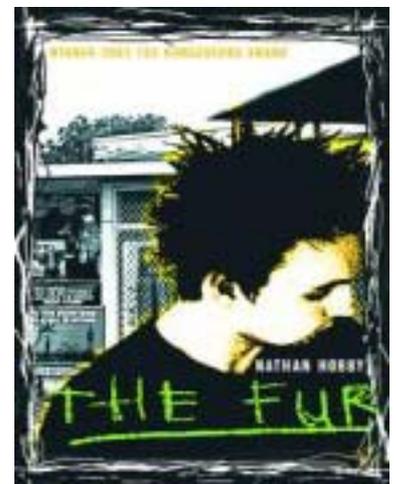
The Fur won Nathan Hobby the T.A.G. HUNGERFORD AWARD 2003 and reviews in major Australian newspapers like the one above. *The Canberra Times* ran an interview with Hobby in their Saturday, August 7, 2004, *Books.etc* section. Bron Sibree, the interviewer and author of the article, says Hobby is "a talent to be watched."

Hobby admits in the interview that Michael's journey in the book from "angst-ridden teenager to burgeoning political activist, 'echoes my own political journey somewhat'".

Describing his personal journey and its connection to the book Hobby says:

I've spent the last six years being angry at fundamentalism. I ended up studying theology and coming to a new faith from what I once believed.

The article says "These days Hobby describes himself as an activist, Anabaptist and author."



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Consultation helps Anabaptists to seek relationships with other Christian traditions

Imagine expanding Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) into more violent places by increasing the number of participating denominations. Imagine talking with Catholics about communion. Imagine having dialogues with Pentecostals about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Imagine realizing that there are some gifts that Mennonite-Anabaptists need from other groups.

That's exactly what a group of 35 participants did during a recent inter-church relations consultation sponsored by Mennonite Church USA. Participants agreed that it's time not only to imagine. It's also time to seek new relationships beyond the corner of Christendom that Anabaptists have occupied since the 16th-century Reformation.

The consultation helped the participants — including pastors, theologians, educators, peace group representatives and members of Mennonite Church USA's executive leadership team — consider how to seek greater cooperation and understanding with other Christian traditions, including Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox.

Seeking new relationships does not mean diffusing Anabaptist distinctiveness, participants said. But it will mean airing differences in the light of God's grace and sharing gifts and strengths, as well as needs and weaknesses. It will mean promoting mutual growth in theological understandings and dreaming of future joint efforts in peacemaking and evangelism.

"Jesus' calling for unity in John 17 is an imperative to be obeyed and not something we do only if we feel like it," said Al Meyer, volunteer director for Mennonite Church USA inter-church relations and planner for the consultation. It was held July 13-15 at the Fatima Retreat Center near the Notre Dame campus in South Bend.

"As Anabaptists, we can be pioneers in helping the world reach God's intentions, as well as receive the gifts of others who are pioneers in areas where we are weak. Christians who come from different experiences need to help each other hear Jesus' call and to follow," he said.

In 1989, thirteen nations comprising 1,695,000 people experienced non-violent revolutions that succeeded beyond anyone's wildest expectations . . . If we add all the countries touched by major non-violent actions in our century (the Philippines, South Africa . . . the independence movement in India . . .) the figure reaches 3,337,400,000, a staggering 65% of humanity! All this in the teeth of the assertion, endlessly repeated, that non-violence doesn't work in the 'real' world.- Walter Wink

Two panel discussions inspired participants to grapple with what it means to be "mutual pioneers" with those from other traditions. Panellists shared what they felt Mennonite-Anabaptists should be ready to contribute and to learn from others.

The presenters in the first panel were other-than-Mennonite and included Stanley Hauerwas, professor of theological ethics at Duke University Divinity School; Rodney Clapp of Brazos Press, a new imprint of Baker Book House; David Burrell, C.S.C., former chair of Notre Dame theology department; and Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

"What you bring to the table is an extraordinary rethinking of Christian theology, and the great discovery at the heart of your movement was simply, Jesus," Hauerwas said. "Michael Sattler looks kind of simple next to Martin Luther, but that is part of the genius...Your focus on the commitment to the unity of the church, non-violence and Jesus as the centre of all you do and say are the things you bring to ecumenical life."

Clapp said he believes that Mennonites are the most realistic of all Christians. "You remind us all that we cannot see the world as it really is outside the realism of Christ," he said. "Everything is subject to God's rule, we cannot see that, except in Jesus. In him we see what God's character really is and where the real humanity is called."

Stassen encouraged Mennonite-Anabaptists to choose Pentecostals as dialogue partners. "Pentecostals praise Jesus and follow Jesus and don't have a thick exegesis but simply say, 'Here's what it means to follow him,'" he said. "They began as pacifists but lacked the deep arguments and these convictions got lost...You could help them recover that, while Mennonites could benefit from their emphasis on the Holy Spirit."

The second panel included Anabaptists. They were Lois Barrett, director of the Great Plains Seminary, an AMBS extension in North Newton, Kansas; Ron Sider, head of Evangelicals for Social Action; and Richard Kauffman, senior editor of *The Leader*, a magazine for Mennonite Church USA leaders. He is currently a senior editor of *Christian Century* and was a former editor of *Christianity Today*.

Sider encouraged the participants to consider enlarging CPT's scope: "What would happen if CPT would take a quantum leap forward from a few dozen people to a few thousand people?" he asked. "CPT has done wonderfully courageous and important things."

Barrett encouraged the participants to continue mutual exchanges with others who are different. "As I think about how Mennonites learn insights from other traditions and share with others, I think this process has been going on a long time, ever since the 16th century," she said. She cited examples, including borrowing from Quakers about how to better listen to the Spirit as part of congregational discernment.

The panellists also invited feedback from participants such as David Boshart, pastor of West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa, who responded to Barrett's presentation. "Traditions can be seen as water tight compartments, and they're not," he said. "Traditions are always taking in from other traditions."

"And we are influenced by the fact that the world as we know it is very secular...I find it heartening to meet someone of faith no matter what that faith is, and the lines between faiths are less and less operative in our world than a few centuries

ago...Christians and people of faith see that something is happening that needs a further cross-fertilization among traditions.”

After receiving challenges from panellists and working in small groups for two days, participants suggested some possible next steps on the pathway to relationships with other traditions. Their suggestions included building relationships with peace fellowships in other denominations; joining a larger church association such as Christian Churches Together in the USA; and encouraging Mennonite congregations to join other churches in reaching out to their communities.

It also may include helping Mennonite-Anabaptist brothers and sisters reconcile over divisive issues by eliciting the help of itinerant evangelists; ensuring that the scope of inter-church exploration includes networking locally, regionally and globally; creating practical ministries as well as absorbing theological and academic understanding; and continuing the healing of memories with such groups as the Catholics, Lutherans and Reformers over issues that caused Anabaptist martyrdom.

Each biennium, Jim Schrag, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, plans to convene a consultation similar to the July 13-15 gathering, because relating with other Christian traditions is increasingly important to the development of the denomination’s calling and identity, he said.

“We’re at a stage of development in Mennonite Church USA when we have the opportunity to expand our witness and vision through connections with other Christian groups,” he said. “We need to both learn from them and also to share our strengths.”

Laurie L. Oswald is News Service Director for Mennonite Church USA.

Watu Wa Amani Conference First For African ‘People of Peace’

Nairobi, Kenya — From August 8-13, delegates gathered here for the first conference of African Historic Peace Churches. Mennonites and Brethren in Christ came from Congo, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, Quakers came from Kenya, Rwanda, Congo and Burundi, and Church of the Brethren came from Nigeria.

These churches all face tough questions: What does it mean to be a peace church in the midst of violent civil conflict? Does the “Historic Peace Church” identity, birthed in other places and times, have anything to contribute?

The “peace church” identity has not been central to many African churches, so reinterpreting the theological language of this historical tradition provoked much discussion.

Stories illustrated the struggles people face. In Northern Nigeria, the Muslim majority seeks to impose its law on the whole society. Bitrus Debki from Kaduna and Matthew Abdullahi Gali from Kano state described clashes where Christians were killed and churches destroyed.

Debki reported: “One of our pastors, who encouraged his congregation to find peace and not fight, had his church surrounded by Muslims on a Sunday morning. They set the church building on fire and shot all the people, including the pastor, when they tried to escape. This is how it is for Christians in Kaduna State in Nigeria. The common man has no security.”

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each person’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

- In Your Enemy’s Shoes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

To respond peacefully is not easy. When churches are repeatedly burned, and Christians are attacked, some members of the EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) call for revenge. Toma Ragnjiya, a peace worker, said, “I am not a pacifist. I will not just be passive. I prefer to fight, but nonviolently!”

Representatives of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe spoke of state-sponsored violence in the 1980’s. Albert Ndlovu talked about the young and unemployed who are sent to “national service” camps for military training to act against any who raise question about authorities.

“Please pray for us as we work with these ‘green bombers,’” exclaimed Patson Netha, from the Association of African Evangelicals.

Currently churches are trying to organize opportunities for change in Zimbabwe. They are engaging government authorities in dialogue. Churches represent one of few remaining non-governmental entities with whom the government can talk.

Cathy Mputu, a Mennonite from Kinshasa, and Ramadhani Kokosi, a Quaker from Bukavu, talked about violence, looting, systematic rape and killing in Congo. The population is caught in the middle of the struggle between armed groups. Churches rely on prayer but also work at strengthening grass-roots peace activities.

Pascal Kulungu, a Mennonite from Congo, reminded participants that peace must be built within churches in conflict alongside working at peace in the society.

Harold Miller, from Mennonite Central Committee, reported on a recent trip to the Darfur region of Sudan. One of the greatest peace stories in Africa today is taking place there alongside the world’s current most stressed humanitarian crises. This juxtaposition reflects Africa: intense crisis alongside great opportunity.

Building peace and reconciliation is also part of the story. “Our national process of forgiveness was able to break a cycle of violence,” said Siaka Traoré, a Mennonite from Burkina Faso. He and two Quakers, Phillippe Nakuwundi from Burundi and Cecile Nyiramana from Rwanda, reported on their churches’ efforts to rebuild relationships after conflict and war.

“The whole country [Rwanda] is traumatized with 120,000 to 130,000 people now in prison,” said Nyiramana. “We want to establish a culture of peace. Right now the Quakers are the only peace church in Rwanda. With our peace centre we aim to further this collaboration.”

African brothers and sisters struggle with how to respond to the violence they face. Report after report indicated that a new chapter to an historical peace church identity is being forged.

David Niyonzima, a Quaker from Burundi, at the close of the conference said that peace starts with God but continues to all human beings and all of God’s creation. He recited African proverbs that focus on interdependence.

He concluded: "My peace depends on other's peace. In Africa, people are communal. Restoration requires a whole village, and we who are members of the Historic Peace Churches must constitute a renewed village."

Delegates from the three denominations held separate discussions on what new work might proceed from this conference. They also drafted a letter to share with other Christian churches to enlarge the process of peacemaking in Africa.

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE RELEASE FROM A REPORT BY ROBERT HERR AND JUDY ZIMMERMAN HERR

Quang Trial May Come Soon

Strasbourg, France - Some observers in Vietnam expect that Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang may be put on trial in Ho Chi Minh City as early as September. Sources there say that authorities are working hard to "fast track" Quang's trial on charges of "possessing and distributing materials harmful to the State."

Other sources, however, believe the government needs more time to review evidence to make its case in court.

A court decision to prosecute would be followed by publication of the indictment and the trial. If convicted on these charges, Quang, who was arrested on June 8, could face up to 20 years in prison.

Sources also say that it is likely that the four evangelists arrested on March 2 and still held without being charged will face a less serious charge of "resisting an officer doing official duty."

Le Thi Hong Lien, a female evangelist, was arrested in early July and is still imprisoned.

Months after their arrests, despite a Vietnamese law stating visits must be allowed within 30 days of incarceration, authorities have allowed monitored visits from the families of five of "the Mennonite Six," as they have become known. All six are being held in Ho Chi Minh City prison, not in the District 2 jail where they were first held.

Quang's wife and three young children visited him on August 18. This was the second visit by Quang's wife.

The mother of brothers Nguyen Thanh Nhan and Nguyen Huu Nghia was allowed separate visits with them on August 23. Her visit with one son was cut short when he began to describe how his brother had been severely beaten.

The father of Pham Ngoc Thach, who was badly beaten when arrested, visited his son in mid-July.

The wife of Nguyen Van Phuong, who gave birth to the couple's first child just before his March 2 arrest, has also been allowed one visit.

Le Thi Hong Lien has not been allowed a family visit because, according to police, she is "uncooperative."

An August 17 report from ethnic minority Mennonite churches in Gia Lai province says that Christians there are still being arrested. In mid-May, two Mennonite evangelists, Ksor Ti No and Ksor Pui Nai, were arrested on unknown charges. Their families have not been allowed visits.

Vietnamese authorities are apparently surprised by the widespread negative publicity generated by their treatment of the Vietnamese Mennonites. It seems they were unaware that the Vietnamese Mennonites are part of a global church body, many

Violence cannot be defeated by better violence; hatred cannot be undone by retribution. The cycle of harm and counter-harm must be broken. 'Do not be overcome by evil,' Paul counsels his hearers, 'but overcome evil with good.' Only then is evil frustrated; only then can we hope to 'live peaceably with all.'

- Chris Marshall, *Overcoming Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 93-94.

of whose members have spoken out on behalf of the imprisoned leaders.

Other church-related and secular media organizations have published news about the Mennonite Six and several countries are putting pressure on Vietnamese authorities regarding the mistreatment of the Mennonite leaders and churches.

In a related development, representatives from the Hanoi office of the Bureau of Religious Affairs on August 10 met the president of the Vietnam Mennonite Church, Pastor Nguyen Quang Trung. They proposed that the church provide information in preparation for granting legal status to the Vietnam Mennonite Church.

They requested a detailed history and activities of the church both before and after 1975: a Confession of Faith, and an organizational charter, the names of pastors, evangelists and volunteers, pre-1975 buildings, current worship groups and locations.

The timing of the offer while key leaders of the Mennonite church are imprisoned suggests that authorities are attempting to isolate these imprisoned leaders. While many church leaders agree in principle that legal recognition is good, they are concerned that authorities would use detailed information about the believers to further restrict and harass the church, especially in the Central Highlands.

In late August, Pastor Quang's wife was summoned to the police station where she was politely told that it would be best to stop holding meetings in her home, which they said were illegal. When she asked them to put the request into writing, they quickly dropped the matter. Late that night the police came to the house and examined the papers of all who were there.

Behind authorities' determination to silence Pastor Quang is his outspoken advocacy on human rights issues. In 1999, he advised and helped alleged squatter families file petitions of complaint against a land grab for "development." The confiscated land included the property of the Quang residence and Mennonite church office.

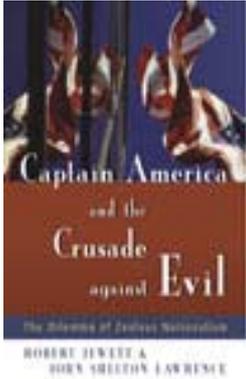
On August 13, 2004, the 346 families received the news that the 1999 land confiscation order had been reversed. The order had, in fact, been reversed on September 13, 2003 with a directive to inform the families within 10 days. However, authorities waited until two months after Pastor Quang's incarceration to make the announcement regarding the decision he had helped to achieve.

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE RELEASE FROM VIETNAMESE MINISTRIES AND OTHER REPORTS

BOOKS AND RESOURCES

Book Notes – Take Two

Below are reviews of two books previously covered in **ON THE ROAD**. These fresh perspectives come from Chris Marshall and we thought were worth printing even if some ground gets covered twice.



The appearance of *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism* (Eerdmans, 2003) could not be more timely. Published after the events of “9/11” and the war in Afghanistan, and just prior to the attack on Iraq, the book serves almost as a commentary on the daily news. Written by two American academics, one a New Testament scholar, Robert Jewett, the other a Christian philosopher, John Shelton Lawrence, it offers a compelling

analysis of the deep forces at work in American history and culture that repeatedly propel that great nation to engage in violent crusades against opponents. The so-called “war on terrorism” and the illegal invasion of Iraq are but the two most recent examples of this fateful tendency.

The book begins by distinguishing two contrary impulses in American civil religion, two opposing ways in which America understands her role in the world. Each can be traced back to different strands of the biblical tradition that has profoundly shaped American identity. On the one hand, America sees herself as a city set on the hill, a shining example to the world of the capacity of democracy, liberty and the rule of law to enable peaceful co-existence between diverse groups. This, the authors propose, reflects the influence of the prophetic tradition in scripture, for the Hebrew prophets held a realistic assessment of their nation’s virtues and vices and advocated God’s impartial justice as the basis of national and international peace.

On the other hand, America also views herself as a “redeemer nation”, specially chosen and favoured by God, with a messianic mission or “Manifest Destiny” to secure world redemption, employing, as needs be, overwhelming force to rid the world of evil and evildoers. This inclination toward crusading nationalism – or militant “jihad”, as it is known elsewhere – also derives from biblical tradition, this time from the “zealous” and “holy war” themes found in such books as Deuteronomy, Daniel and Revelation, themes which have spawned religious violence in all three of the great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. “We believe”, the authors write, “that it is incumbent on all believers to struggle against the lethal impulses that lie within their own religious traditions” (147).

The American Monomyth

The American proclivity for self-righteous crusading zeal has been present since the time of the Puritan Fathers, who themselves subscribed to a theology of violent crusade. But over the past 60 years or so, crusading ideals have become increasingly dominant in the American outlook. This is visible not only in US foreign policy (as we all know) but also in the comic books, television programmes, films, and video games of

popular culture. The stories told in such popular entertainment are strikingly similar, in both plot and characterisation; they give expression to what the authors call the “American monomyth”.

The myth centres on the all-American superhero, such as Captain America or Superman, who comes to the rescue of the helpless community threatened by crime or war or alien invasion. The Superhero is a lone saviour figure who combines moral perfection and transcendent, godlike powers. When confronted by genuine evil, he typically expresses frustration with the capacity of democratic institutions and the due process of law to cope with the problem. Democracy can only be saved, the story teaches, if the hero steps outside the legal order to destroy evildoers in an explosion of righteous, purifying violence.

There is, in other words, a fascist dimension to the American monomyth: the world is saved for democracy by some unelected figure transcending established democratic limits on the exercise of power to wreak vengeance on those who threaten him or his community. Such stories carry an implicit invitation for the audience to emulate such heroic vigilantism, and American political consciousness is finely attuned to exploiting the archetypes of mass entertainment. So American Superheroism, while advocated in the name of democratic ideals, is, in fact, a serious threat to those very ideals.

This “Captain America Complex” has deep religious roots. It stems from the application to America of the mission ascribed in the Bible to Israel – or at least of *one* of the ways the Bible conceives of Israel’s mission. The authors maintain that there are two antithetical understandings of Israel’s mission apparent in the Bible. One affirms Israel’s use of righteous violence to destroy the nation’s enemies or forcibly convert them to Yahweh. The other, articulated by prophets like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, repudiates fanatical nationalism and stresses Israel’s vocation as the proclaimer of Yahweh’s impartial justice as the basis for genuine peace.

These two conceptions of mission – zealous triumphalism on the one hand, and prophetic realism on the other – compete for attention throughout the biblical record. In the New Testament, the clearest enunciation of prophetic realism comes from Jesus of Nazareth. He openly rejected the use of violence to bring in God’s kingdom and warned of the dangers of a zealous uprising against Rome. But his warning was not heeded and he himself was executed as a renegade. Worse still, his message was misunderstood and distorted by many of his followers. The most harmful distortion, the authors argue, is found in the Book of Revelation. Here the peaceful and realistic message of Jesus is submerged in a plethora of zealous images and ideas. The saints are urged to keep themselves pure and undefiled as God pours out annihilating wrath on their opponents, who are stereotyped as bestial and irredeemable. No other biblical book has had such a formative influence on American national identity as the Book of Revelation – as the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” (1863) reveals.

“God is anonymously present whenever people honestly confront the consequences of evil and seek to deal with it in redemptive ways.”
- Chris Marshall, *Overcoming Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 89.

“The true social significance of restorative justice lies in its capacity to restore hope to a hopeless society.” - Chris Marshall, *Overcoming Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 93.

The early Puritan immigrants applied to America the crusading ideal of mission. America was a chosen nation, predestined by Providence to bring redemption to the world. For millennial peace to dawn however, violent suppression of evildoers (including the native inhabitants of the land) was necessary, and God would grant victory to his people. In the generations that followed, this sense of being a millennial nation was supported and reinforced by periodic religious revival and reform movements. These movements emphasised that moral righteousness and religious piety were the essential prerequisites for the nation realising her triumphant destiny. On this understanding, triumph in times of war – which America has nearly always enjoyed – are but confirmation of her superior virtue and unique destiny.

The Politics of the Rapture

One of the most fascinating chapters in the book traces the intimate connection over the past 25 years between the “rapture theology” of prominent American television evangelists, like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, and US foreign policy and military expansionism. This merits some spelling out here, both because rapture theology is commonplace in conservative Christianity in New Zealand and because, in these days of militant jihad, it is an outlook with disturbing, if not dangerous, implications.

The term “rapture” derives from the Latin translation of 1 Thess. 4:17, which speaks of the “coming” of the Lord and the saints being “caught up” (or raptured) to meet him in the air. This obscure verse played a minor theological role until it became crucial for the Plymouth Brethren in England in the 1830s. After a female prophet had a vision, the new idea of a “pre-tribulation rapture” emerged and became prevalent among British and North American fundamentalists. It was fused with dispensationalism in the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909). Through it, the belief that we are now living in the final dispensation of world history and that true believers will soon be whisked away to enjoy heavenly bliss while the world careers toward a final great conflagration in the Battle of Armageddon, has become common currency in conservative Christianity.

The extraordinary popularity of such apocalyptic theology can be measured by the number of best-selling books, videos, feature movies and web sites devoted to it. Hal Lindsay’s *Late Great Planet Earth* sold some 40 million copies (making him a “millennial millionaire”), while materials associated with the *Left Behind* series have so far recorded more than 39 million sales. As a consequence, rapture theology has advanced from the fundamentalist fringes of religious life into the mainstream of American Christianity – with the dating of the rapture being “the most widely discussed theological issue in the culture” (138). More than that, “these eager anticipations of global doomsday...have on occasion reached into the highest levels of American government” (134), and profoundly influenced US foreign policy.

At first, millennial preachers like Hal Lindsay, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson argued that the last generation (of 40 years) commenced with the re-birth of the state of Israel in 1948. On this reckoning, the end of history would occur in 1988, with the pre-tribulation rapture taking place seven years earlier, in 1981. The fixing of this date coincided with the advent, in 1978, of “one of the most remarkable political movements in American history” (140). The “Moral Majority” attracted the political involvement of tens of thousands of fundamentalist pastors and churches which had previously avoided any political activity. They entered an alliance with conservative Catholics, Lutherans, Mormons, and non-apocalyptic fundamentalists.

Convinced the final crisis in world history was only a few years away, the Moral Majority supported candidates and policies that prepared America for her role in the Battle of Armageddon, including an enlarged military budget and a stronger nuclear force. They offered unquestioning support for Israel, forging an alliance with the conservative Likud bloc, and rejected Palestinian claims to autonomy. They resisted any compromise with the Soviet Union, which, after all, would be arraigned with Satan in the final showdown. They took an uncompromising position on moral issues, such as abortion, since moral righteousness was required to ensure victory in the coming war.

Although the movement itself was short lived (the Rapture did not occur in 1981!), its impact on American political life has been enormous. It contributed decisively to Reagan’s election in 1980, and brought into office a new generation of leadership in the Republican Party. “Within a short time it had largely transformed the conservative Republican party, which had hitherto been committed to federalism, capitalism, and the international rule of law, into a millenarian party resistant to federal authority, hostile to the traditional American politics of compromise, and profoundly suspicious of international law and peacekeeping” (140-41). The legacy of this development is being felt currently in the Bush Administration.

Although the dating scheme based on 1948 failed, rapture theology in North America continued unabated. “It negotiated one of the smoothest transitions through the minefield of apocalyptic failure that history has to report”. (140) Some now started dating the final generation from Jerusalem’s recapture in 1967. This made 2007 the end, and 2000 the time for the pre-tribulation rapture (!) The passing of this date has led to a greater reluctance to specify actual dates, but the blithe assertion that we are living in the final generation is still widely trumpeted, and commonly accepted.

Negative Implications

While many of us may smile at the extraordinary gullibility and mindlessness of those who buy into such an eschatology, its widespread currency in the conservative wing of the church is a cause of concern. This is because such naive apocalypticism – what the authors call the “doom boom” – carries with it a range of disturbing political and ethical implications. Four are worth mentioning:

- **Escapism:** rapture theology breeds a smug escapism which reinforces the mass escapism of popular superhero entertainment. To quote the authors:

When people are taught that correct beliefs and membership in the proper sect will guarantee their escape from the tribulation and hence from the threats of nuclear annihilation or terrorism, the proponents

of those views have inserted an element of escapism into the civil religion. This comfortable vision of the end is actually unprecedented in Christian eschatology. Prior to the 1830s, Christian apocalyptics taught that believers would have to suffer for their faith. The realism of these earlier apocalyptic theologies is consistent with the sayings of Jesus, Paul, Hebrews, and the prophets – and greatly at variance with modern teaching. While the appeal of such escapist doctrine in threatening circumstances is obvious, its effect on a voting public is ominous. It tends to reinforce the escapism of mass entertainment, in which innocent communities are rescued by superheroes who arrive in the nick of time to destroy the wicked (143).

- **Militarism:** it feeds the belief that a super-president and the availability of superior military power will provide final security in a threatening world. According to such a belief, the righteous will escape from even a nuclear holocaust unleashed on the wicked enemy. From their grandstand in heaven, they will watch the spectacle of millions being butchered in the Final Battle

- **Moral Absolutism:** the mindset behind popular apocalypticism rejects in principle any compromise with opponents, since this is to succumb to demonic deception.

The modern form of Rapture theology divides the world into true believers, those who will be rescued from the tribulation, and the rest of the inhabitants of planet earth, who will suffer because of their sins. This sustains the popular feeling that Americans are innocent while their adversaries are full of malice, that political opponents are evil and should be opposed on principle (144).

Yet compromise is the essence of constitutional democracy, and the essential condition for peaceful coexistence between different communities.

- **Opposition to agencies that work for peace and environmental protection:** Proponents of rapture theology in the US are resistant to international institutions and international law, since they are convinced that God wills a global catastrophe and there is nothing humans can do to avert it. Thus, along with a preoccupation with military preparedness, this theology shows an unrelenting hostility to international agencies that work toward peace or the resolution of ecological issues. Efforts to deal with pollution and the global ecological crisis are futile and counterproductive. International institutions only give America, the chosen people, only one vote alongside all other countries. Every compromise with America’s adversaries is a betrayal of divine trust; every attempt at arms control is a sell out to demonic forces.

In view of such distortions, the authors call, not for a rejection of apocalyptic entirely, but for a more responsible use of it – such as we find in Jesus and Paul, who combined a message of cosmic upheaval with a peaceful ethic of love and reconciliation.

On a similar note, the authors argue that the whole notion of zeal needs to be used in a responsible manner. The authors distinguish four forms of zeal, each with roots in the biblical material. There is the “hot zeal” of holy war and violent cleansing (Phineas, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha); the “cool zeal”

of remote-control retribution, where the righteous remain passive while God uses other instruments to do the dirty work (as in Daniel and Revelation); the “artful zeal” that unscrupulously manipulates zealous tendencies in the community to gain personal political advantage (Jehu); and “responsible” or “pilgrim zeal”, that redirects the legitimate emotional and moral intensity of zeal toward love of enemy and the pursuit of peace and justice. In an insightful discussion, the authors show how Jesus’ teaching on anger breaks the link between human rage and divine wrath and renders killing in God’s name to be, simply, murder. In light of this analysis, America needs to re-examine the kind of destructive zeal that has marked, and continues to characterise, her history.

In the remainder of the book, the authors analyse several characteristic features of crusading zeal, each time highlighting their presence in certain strands of the biblical record, their contribution to the “Captain America Complex”, and their remedy in the realism of the biblical prophets, and of Jesus in particular. The features examined include grand conspiracy theories of evil, with the illusion that evil can be defeated by eliminating evildoers; radical stereotyping, with one’s own community having the monopoly on innocence and goodness and rival communities or individuals being characterised as the incarnation of evil; the mystique of redemptive violence, where

“righteous” violence is considered salvific inasmuch as the total destruction of the enemy is considered necessary for world redemption and therefore virtuous; the equation of victory with divine vindication and defeat with humiliation; and the idolatrous sacralization of symbols of national identity, such as the American flag.

On this latter point, I found it fascinating to learn that the inclusion of the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance and the stamping of the national currency with the slogan “in God we trust”, are quite recent innovations; they stem from the Cold War period in 1950s as part of an effort to emphasise virtuous American theism in contrast to communist atheism.

The authors conclude by drawing themes from Isaiah’s oracles of ideal government to chart a peaceful alternative to militant jihad or crusading nationalism. Somewhat surprisingly they suggest that America should not abandon her mission in the world as a redeemer nation but should redefine it in Isaianic terms. What this means in practice is a commitment to international law and international institutions, rather than military supremacy, as the only way to bring genuine peace and justice to the world.

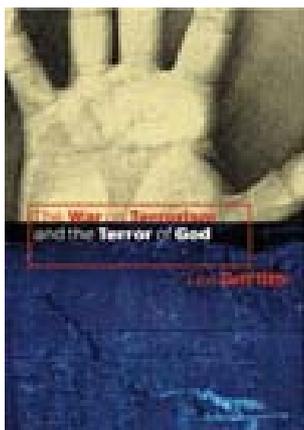
Against this background, the recent conquest of Iraq exemplifies, not the selfless commitment to liberate the oppressed people of Iraq and promote democracy and the rule of law, as publicly claimed by the Bush administration, but the continuing ascendancy of the idolatrous “Captain America Complex” and its delusionary belief in the power of redemptive violence to conquer evil and make the world safe for democracy!

Captain America is one of the most fascinating books I have read. It is not above criticism of course. It might be argued, for example, that construing the biblical tradition as a contest between two contradictory impulses – crusading zeal and prophetic realism – is a too convenient and simplistic way of dealing with the complexities and ambiguities of the ancient text. But there can be little debate that zealous ideals have had a tragic

...over the past 60 years or so, crusading ideals have become increasingly dominant in the American outlook.

legacy in the subsequent belief and practice of the great monotheistic faiths. In face of global terrorism, both that of Osama bin Laden and that of Uncle Sam, it is more urgent than ever to break the link between “holy” violence and the will of God. “Blessed are the peacemakers”, said Jesus, “for they shall be called the children of God”.

The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God (Lee Griffith, Eerdmans, 2002) is a book that I found myself saying “yes” to so often that I would like to have written it myself, if only I had the requisite knowledge and skill to do so, which, sadly, I don’t. So I am immensely grateful that Lee Griffith has used his enormous expertise to produce this profound and provocative Christian analysis of what is, arguably, *the* great issue of our day, terrorism and the so-called war on terrorism.



Incredibly Griffith completed the manuscript of this book before 9/11 occurred. Apart from an initial paragraph and a short postscript reflecting on this awful event and its aftermath, Griffith changed nothing in his text as a result of 9/11. That his analysis remains as applicable today as it was before the day when, as he puts it, the clear skies over New York “started raining human beings”, is a testament to the author’s prophetic insight and power. Indeed the message of his Postscript is that, contrary to what nearly everyone said at the time, the world did *not* change forever on September 11, 2001. The carnage of the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, and of the devastating US response, merely shows how *little* the world has changed, of how much the pattern of tit-for-tat violence, strike and counter-strike, remains as predictable, and futile, as ever.

The book comprises five long chapters. Each chapter blends together reflection on three areas – on the contemporary state of the world, on the lessons of history, and on the message of the biblical text. Griffith explores the meaning and ethics of terrorism, the paradoxical nature of the terror of the biblical God, and what is needed practically to break the cycle of terrorist violence.

But precisely what constitutes “terrorism”? The definition and application of the term is by no means uncontested. Those who to one set of eyes are noble freedom fighters are to other eyes merciless terrorists. Not infrequently the self-same party is reclassified when its target changes, even though its methods remain the same. In the 1980s, America poured billions of dollars into training and equipping guerrilla resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. After the Soviet withdrawal, some of these fighters turned their weapons on their former sponsors, and in doing so became “Islamic terrorists”. There is also a long tradition of reserving the label for non-governmental agencies and individuals. Griffith strongly opposes this limitation. He rightly asserts that “the characterisation of an action as terrorism depends on *what* is done, not on *who* does it”. From this it follows that a good deal of the much trumpeted war on terrorism is as terroristic as the terrorism it claims to deplore.

Throughout the book Griffith provides a Christian critique of reliance on violence as a justifiable and effective means of resolving conflict. He outlines a number of steps that can be taken to combat terrorism non-violently. Some relate to what the great powers can do, such as halting the arms trade, desisting from military interventionism, and shutting down the CIA and related agencies (!). Others relate to what individual believers and communities can do, such as refusing to be afraid at the command of politicians and the media. Christians should also avoid “the homiletics of terror” by which they seek to secure conversions or conformity by instilling the fear of hell and damnation. Churches, Griffith suggests, should be terror-free zones. After all, the two greatest moments in the Christian story, the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus, are both accompanied by the divine command, “Be not afraid”. If the church were to proclaim and to embody in its own life the freedom that comes from the conquest of fear and violence, it truly would represent good news to this age of dread.

—CHRIS MARSHALL

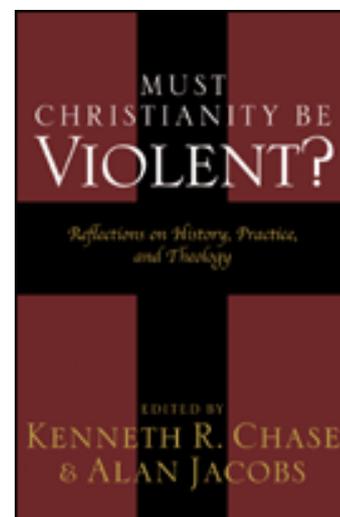
**Must
Christianity Be
Violent?
Reflections on
History, Practice
and Theology**
KENNETH R. CHASE AND
ALAN JACOBS, EDS.
BRAZOS PRESS, 2003

In March 2000, a group of scholars met at Wheaton College [Illinois, USA] to discuss the widespread presumption in Western culture that Christianity’s historic and

continuing complicity in violence invalidates its claim to embody moral and spiritual truth. Little did these scholars know that before their papers would reach publication stage, the Western world would be shaken to the core by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This horrific event, and its equally horrific aftermath, have brought to the surface once again the centuries-old debate about whether religion in general, and the three great Abrahamic faiths in particular, is one of the major causes of violence in the world. This renewed sensitivity about the relationship between religious faith and large scale violence makes the appearance of this volume of essays very timely.

The collection is divided into three sections. The first contains essays on the three major historical episodes which many critics take to be incontrovertible proof of the inherently violent character of Christianity – the Crusades, the European conquest of the Americas, and the ensuing American slave trade, and the Nazi holocaust. A concluding essay in this section by famed historian Mark Noll asks whether, on balance, Christianity has done more harm than good in history.

The second section includes essays dealing with positive Christian practices with respect to resisting violence. Once again



North American slavery and the holocaust furnish remarkable lessons. One essay in this section outlines two key theological principles which, the author proposes, should guide Christian peacemaking. Another, by Fuller Seminary's Glen Stassen, outlines an important third paradigm he has developed to complement the two dominant paradigms for discussing Christian attitudes to war and peace, the just war theory and pacifism. Unlike the existing models, the "just peacemaking" paradigm focuses not on the question of what circumstances justify war but on what practices help prevent war.

The third section of the book addresses theological themes more directly. Most of this section is devoted to interaction with the work of prominent public theologian John Milbank. The essay by Milbank himself is far and away the most difficult and dense in the book, so it is particularly helpful to have a chapter recording the question and answer session that followed his presentation of the paper. There is also an account of a fascinating dialogue between Milbank and the equally prominent American ethicist Stanley Hauerwas on whether Christian discipleship requires pacifism.

Although modestly entitled "Afterword", the final chapter in the book, by Alan Jacobs, is a notable and insightful reflection on the central issue of religion and violence. Altogether this is a valuable collection of essays on one of the most important challenges of our day, and of every other day in human history for that matter.

- CHRIS MARSHALL

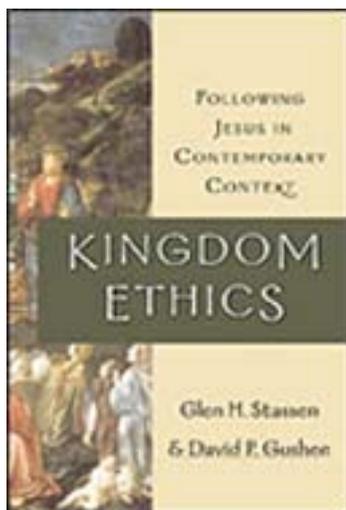
Kingdom Ethics Following Jesus in Contemporary Context

GLEN H. STASSEN AND DAVID P. GUSHEE, IVP, 2003

Many fine books on Christian biblical ethics have appeared over recent years. We are now seriously embarrassed by riches when it comes to works which engage thoughtfully and creatively with the moral implications of New Testament faith and Christian commitment.

In this book, another gem has been added to our treasure, and one that shines with its own distinctive lustre. Its authors are two leading Baptist ethicists in America, one of whom teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary. They write with clarity and purpose, approaching the ethical task with a combination of theological insight, biblical reflection, philosophical learning, and personal storytelling.

In many respects, *Kingdom Ethics* reaffirms and deepens the challenge raised a generation ago by the Mennonite ethicist John Howard Yoder to bring Jesus back into Christian ethics. Like Yoder, the authors assume that the example of Jesus, and in particular his radical teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, are normative for Christian life and practice. Surprising as it may



sound, this has not generally been accepted in Christian moral teaching, much less in the church's own praxis. But, as Stassen and Gushee demonstrate, Christian ethics is not merely a list of moral precepts or a set of abstract moral norms. It is a personal and communal style of living in the world which bears witness to the transforming impact of God's kingdom, as it is made known in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Christian ethics are kingdom ethics, and God's kingdom lays claim to every dimension of life. Accordingly, as well as furnishing a solid theoretical foundation for ethical reflection, the book explores kingdom responses to a wide range of contemporary concerns. It deals with issues surrounding the origins, ending and premature taking of human life; issues to do with sexuality, marriage and gender; and issues to do with racial, economic, political and ecological justice.

This is an impressive and exciting book. It is scholarly yet accessible, wide-ranging yet consistently returns to the moral and theological vision of Jesus for guidance. There is so much to learn from its clear-sighted approach to the methodology of Christian ethics and its intelligent, compassionate examination of moral problems. If ever there was a time when the Christian community needed to recover the moral meaning of following Jesus, this is it, and *Kingdom Ethics* will go a long way in helping us do so.

Here is ethics from a disciple's perspective. I recommend it highly. It merits widespread use in both church and academy.

- CHRIS MARSHALL

New Zealand Books

I recently read four books from Philip Garside Publishing, a New Zealand book publisher (www.pgpl.co.nz). I wanted to learn more about the church scene in New Zealand, half of the AAANZ geographical network. Next are some short introductions to these books. If readers know of other Kiwi books we should be reading, please let us know.

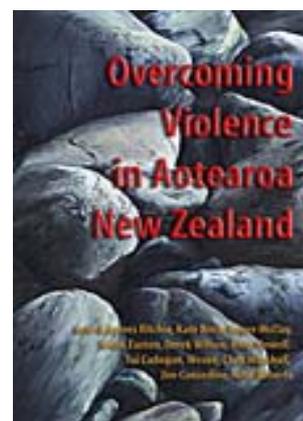
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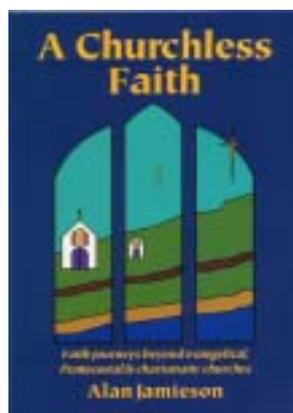
Overcoming Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

This book was written as a New Zealand contribution to the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010. Among the eleven contributors is Chris Marshall with a helpful chapter entitled

"Grounding Justice in Reality: Theological Reflections on Overcoming Violence in the Criminal Justice System".

If your picture of New Zealand is just the idyllic one featured on Australian television ads about "100% Pure New Zealand" you are in for a surprise when you read this book. Violence against women and children, violence in the Maori community, and violence in the criminal justice system are all dealt with in striking honesty. Poetry is also a feature in this small but important volume.





A Churchless Faith

BY ALAN JAMIESON, 2001

Alan Jamieson is a pastor from Wellington who also trained as a sociologist. This book is based on his PhD that researched why people leave their church and their continued journeys of faith outside the church.

The book's sub-title is "Faith journeys beyond evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic churches." Many in the AAANZ network fall into the category explored in the book.

Called Again

In and beyond the deserts of faith

ALAN JAMIESON, 2004

This book follows up Jamieson's first book *A Churchless Faith*. It seeks to connect people with the stories of others who have been through "dark places of the faith" and provide resources to support their faith journeys.

One story from Australia illustrates the difference between well-digging and fence-building:

In some areas of Australia large sections of land go for mile after mile without any sign of fences. A visitor intrigued at how farming cattle was possible without fences asked a local farmer who explained, "Oh, that's no problem. Out here we dig wells instead of building fences." The implication... "There is no need to fence cattle in when they are highly motivated to stay within range of their source of life." What we need in our approach to evangelism is far more emphasis on wells and far less on fences. Getting people to climb over fences is not the issue. Being drawn to Christ is. (131)

The book ends with the image of "waystations" as an image for churches in the future. Jamieson says:

Increasingly we are seeing that the church in the west is entering a dark night, a new exile, a desert journey as well. The settled period of christendom is crumbling and with it the structures and ways of church and the forms of faith that the christendom model of church has espoused. In this time the journeys of individual wayfarers and waystations become models for the future.

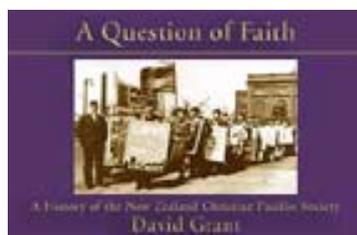
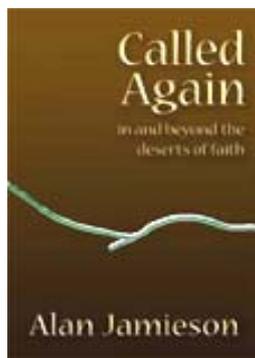
...this process of deconstruction and death of the old lays the space for God's bringing of new life and shape to the churches as well. (155-156)

A Question of Faith

A History of the New Zealand Christian Pacifist Society

BY DAVID GRANT, 2004

This book comes from an author who is a professional historian interested in the pacifist history of New Zealand. It is complete with photos and stories of a movement that brought together Christian pacifists in opposition to World War II and New Zealand's involvement in it. Grant traces the organization as it ages with its members and slowly dies out.



Discovering More About John Howard Yoder

John Howard Yoder became known to the wider Christian community for one book and one book alone, *The Politics of Jesus*. He was a prolific author and an influential teacher whose students are now starting to make a deep impression on the theological scene in North America.

Much of his work had not been published at the time of his death, though it had often been circulated widely in manuscript form. Since his death in September 1997 there has been a determined effort by friends and students to make much of this unpublished material more widely available to the Christian community. The results of these efforts have born fruit in an impressive and diverse collection of published essays on a wide range of theological topics. In what follows I will try to provide a brief survey of the publications of which I have become aware.

To those who have viewed Yoder through the lens of his reporting on New Testament scholarship the collection of lecture material published as *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* may come as a surprise. He is here tackling traditional themes in theological method focussed around the church fathers and the development of Christology. The volume has an introduction by Alex Sider and Stanley Hauerwas and was published in a hardback volume by Brazos Press in 2002. It was prepared for students commencing theological study and provides a useful insight into Yoder's understanding of the theological task and the importance of Christology.

The next significant collection of previously unpublished material breaks new theological ground in the area of Jewish Christian dialogue. *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited* by John Howard Yoder, edited by Michael G Cartwright and Peter Ochs was published in 2003 by Eerdmans with a British edition published by SCM. This collection of essays brings together in one place a collection of essays that take a number of fresh approaches, biblical and ecclesiological and topical to the history and possibility of Jewish-Christian relationships. The essays are accompanied by commentary by Peter Ochs from a Jewish perspective that provides commentary, response and questions following each of the essays.

To Hear the Word is a miscellaneous collection of Yoder's essays on themes related to the way Yoder read Scripture. There is no editorial attribution and the title was published by Wipf and Stock in 2001. The book falls into three parts. Part one comprises three exegetical studies. Part 2 *Reading with Care*, provides us with a number of essays explaining how and why Yoder read Scripture the way he did. Part 3 *Archives* includes several rather more dated pieces that cast further light on this topic.

Karl Barth and the Problem of War edited with a foreword by Mark Thiessen Nation provides us with a reprint of a book originally published by Abingdon Press. As a bonus the editor has included 5 further essays by Yoder on Karl Barth, three of which have never been published before. This is a valuable collection that will be of interest to students of both Barth and Yoder and was

published by Cascade Books, a division of Wipf and Stock Publishers in 2003.

Wipf and Stock also reprinted Yoder's collection of essays *He Came Preaching Peace* (1998) that was originally published by Herald Press in their Christian Peace Shelf collection in 1985. This is a good collection of accessible bible studies relevant to the Christian call to peacemaking.

One collection of material that is a little more difficult to classify is the publication by Thomas L. Shaffer entitled *Moral Memorandum from John Howard Yoder: Conversations on Law, Ethics and the Church between a Mennonite Theologian and a Hoosier Lawyer* (2002). The author/complier of this volume is a professor of Law at Notre Dame University and a recipient of a variety of memorandum from Yoder during their years together at Notre Dame. This book takes the form of a conversation between Shaffer and Yoder and Yoder's comments come from these memoranda. This is a relatively informal book which testifies to the capacity of Yoder to engage people from well outside his own theological world in probing conversation on political and ethical issues. Like several of the previous titles, this volume was also published by Wipf and Stock.

Material published by mainstream Christian publishers such as Brazos Press and Eerdmans should not be difficult to obtain. Any local Christian bookshop should be able to order those titles easily. Titles published by Wipf and Stock are another matter entirely. Agents for Christian publishers in Australia do not seem to have been enthusiastic about chasing them up. Certainly you could have a go, hopefully with more success than I had. Your fall back option is to go to the internet either through the Wipf and Stock website or through a mainstream on-line bookstore such as Amazon.

- DOUG HYND

Yoder Sources Online

John Howard Yoder's Home Page

<http://www.nd.edu/~theo/jhy/>

This website makes available online a selection of Yoder's unpublished, out-of-print, or hard to find writings. It is offered as a service to fellow scholars, educators, and students.

MennoLink Books and Music: John Howard Yoder

A source for 16 books by or about Yoder.

<http://www.mennolink.org/books/johnhowardyoder.html>

A Praxis of Peace: The 'Politics of Jesus' According to John Howard Yoder

Earl Zimmerman, Assistant Professor of Bible at Eastern Mennonite University, talks about successfully defending his doctoral dissertation and summarizes his findings in the Bible department's Spring 2004 newsletter.

www.emu.edu/bible/newsletter.pdf

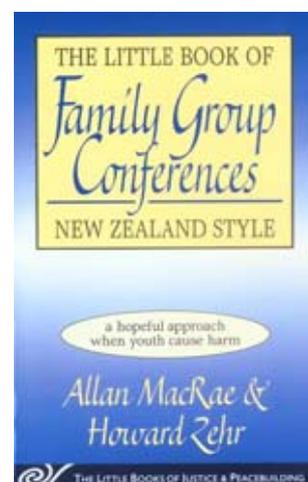
The Little Book of Family Group Conferences New Zealand Style

BY ALLAN MACRAE AND
HOWARD ZEHR
GOOD BOOKS, 2004

This volume is one of the latest in the helpful "Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding" series from Good Books. Like the others in the series, it is a good summary of its topic in a very readable and inexpensive format.

For some it may be hard to believe that New Zealand is leading the world in anything but in the area of criminal justice, New Zealand is setting the standard for the rest of the world. Restorative justice programmes have been taken onboard by the government. The 1989 Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act made the New Zealand legal system the first in the world to institutionalize a form of restorative justice. "Family Group Conferences became the hub of New Zealand's entire juvenile justice system. In New Zealand today, an FGC, not a courtroom, is intended to be the normal site for making such decisions." (11)

This book describes the FGC process and the benefits for all involved. Stories, like the one below, are used to illustrate the human side of the process.



One evening I accompanied a facilitator to an evening meeting at a local cultural center. Before the meeting started, we ate and socialized. A young man came over and sat down beside me. He introduced himself. Through our conversation, I told him that I was there to study the FGC process. He said, 'Oh, yeah, I've been to a few of those.'

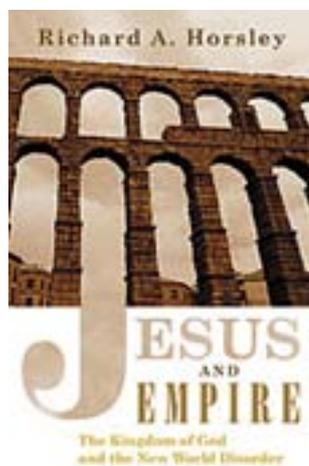
I said, 'Really, could you tell me about them?'

He said casually, 'They were FGCs for me.'

Then he went on to praise the process and said that the FGCs turned him around. He said he did a lot of cultural work now, had a wonderful wife and baby, and a job he was proud of. I asked what he did. He said he was in the janitorial maintenance field. I said it sounded as if he'd found the right job. He said, 'I absolutely have. I work at McDonald's; I do all the cleaning-tables, floors, toilets. I love it.'

He made me feel that with that kind of sincerity and sense of self-worth, he'll probably own a few McDonald's before he's finished. Here he had run with the wolves, and now he's running with life.

- An anonymous observer



Jesus and Empire The Kingdom of God and The New World Disorder

BY RICHARD A. HORSLEY
FORTRESS PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS, 2003

*[The Romans are] the
plunderers of the world . . . If the
enemy is rich, they are rapacious,
if poor they lust for domination.*

Not East, not West has sated them

*. . . They rob, butcher, plunder, and call it "empire"; and
where they make desolation, they call it "peace." (15)*

The above quote, from the speech by Galgacus, Chief of the Caledonians to his army (attributed to the Historian Tacitus) after being vanquished by the Roman Army in 84 C.E., shows how little has changed in human history. Empires have always seen themselves as saviours of barbarians or messengers of light to peoples they conquer, but the result is the same - desolation.

Richard Horsley, in *Jesus and Empire; The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*, takes a second look at the socio/political context of Jesus' ministry. Horsley's scholarly approach is impeccable and methodically he lays out the case for countering Western theologies that 'depoliticize' Jesus. If one views Jesus' ministry and words out of their religious, social and political context, they can only have a spiritual meaning but say nothing to the current socio/political reality. There is never a time, however, where people say and do things isolated from their surroundings. Imagine removing the sayings of Gandhi from his struggle for Indian self rule in the face of British colonization. Imagine the sayings of Martin Luther King Jr. in isolation from the civil rights movement. It is impossible to understand these leaders' words and actions apart from their context of oppression. Gandhi and King's sayings evoke feelings, attitudes, and memories that influence how we interpret their actions. It is imperative, therefore, to re-examine Jesus within the context that influenced him and his listeners. That context was the conquest and occupation of the Middle East by the Romans who exacted heavy tribute through their client kings and Jewish religious leaders.

Horsley draws much of his research from two sources chronologically closest to the ministry of Jesus. These are "Q" and the book of Mark. "Q," German for Quelle meaning source, is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus that appear in parallel passages found in Matthew and Luke. The "Q" sayings, according to New Testament scholars, were carried orally long before being incorporated into written form. (64) These sources predate the harsh Roman crackdown on Jewish resistance that led to the destruction of the temple and sacking of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. It is from these sources that Horsley determines that Jesus' prime audience was a peasant Jewish Judean and Galilean population. Thus, Horsley concludes that "the fundamental conflict [manifest in Mark] lies between rulers and ruled, not 'Judaism' and 'Christianity'." (93)

According to Horsley, Jesus' ministry was steeped in prophetic tradition, well known to the Jews throughout their

history. He pronounced God's judgment on both the empire's occupying force, their client king Herod, and the high priests who were "integral parts of the newly established Roman imperial order in the Middle East" (34). Further, Jesus' ministry was to bring hope to a local peasantry, whose family structures were being eroded by the harsh burden of tribute, by strengthening existing local communities. Horsley contends that Jesus' ministry worked within the local village/synagogue structure where he healed, cast out demons, and proclaimed the judgment of God on the oppressors. All of this was done within the call to renewal of God's covenant with His people. By drawing on the central Exodus and Mosaic covenant themes, Jesus reaffirmed the cultural and religious roots of the Jewish people. Recall that the central themes in the covenant include allegiance solely to God (as opposed to Caesar who claimed to be a deity), communal justice (as opposed to Roman heavy-handed rule) and the economic egalitarianism of Jubilee (as opposed to the heavy weight of taxation and tribute).

In the last chapter called Epilogue, Horsley synthesizes his research into what has been becoming obvious throughout the earlier parts of the book. In a damning essay that compares ancient Rome with the current American empire, he traces the evolution and cooption of the chosen people motif. He states; "As the United States itself, having co-opted God to bless it, became an object of devotion in the American civil religion, as it assumed the messianic mission of saving the world the churches and other religious institutions became ever more marginalized." (148) The key question is what church, the church as apologist

**May the Spirit
Bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths and
Superficial relationships so that
You will live deep in your heart.**

**May the Spirit
Bless you with anger
At injustice and oppression,
And exploitation of people and the earth
So that you will work for
Justice, equity and peace.**

**May the Spirit
Bless you with tears to shed
For those who suffer
So that you will
Reach out your hand
To comfort them.**

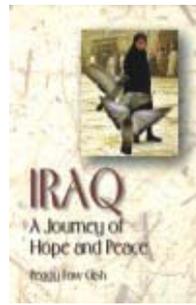
**And may the Spirit
Bless you with the foolishness
To think you can make a difference
In the world,
So you will do the things
Which others say cannot be done.
Called Again - In and beyond the deserts of faith,
Alan Jamieson, 2004, p.141**

for the empire or harbinger of the Kingdom of God? One has the power to support and bless the empire, the other has the capacity to be both prophetic to the empire and speak for the marginalized.

While this book is an important contribution to the current reality for the church, faith, and empire, I long for an Anabaptist rendering of the subject. At several places in the book, I want Horsley to expand on a particular topic. For example, he lists accounts from the historian Josephus describing a nonviolent mass action where the Jews protest of some Roman decree or other. Unlike most violent rebellions against the Imperium, which are quashed with overwhelming force, these nonviolent demonstrations actually change the Roman client ruler's mind. Further where Horsley covers the beatitudes in Matthew, he rushes past the principle of loving enemies rather than exploring why Jesus said to do that and what implications for empire that action might have had (118). Where I take a divergent path, is Horsley's treatment of the resurrection with cold literary scepticism. In fact, his reading of the miracles and other 'unexplainable' interventions of God make the book so gnostically sterile that I nearly lose hope in the transcendent and incarnational reality of Jesus. Horsley's investigative technique gives no credence to the realm of God as mystery, Jesus as incarnate and Holy Spirit as changing hearts.

Still this book is worthy of study because a 'depoliticized' Jesus is all too familiar a characteristic in Western theology. What Horsley does well, is remind us that Jesus' words and actions were a direct challenge to the Roman Empire. Why else, he asks, would Jesus have been killed by Imperial execution in the same manner as contemporary rebels and revolutionaries who threatened the Imperial status quo? Reading *Jesus and Empire* reminds us that the church is a community that can speak the truth into the current global disorder that makes war while calling it peace, plunders the poor to bring obscene prosperity to the rich and make monoculturally desolate that which was once unfettered diversity.

- BOOK REVIEWER: JON RUDY, MCC ASIA PEACE RESOURCE



New Releases from Herald Press *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace*

BY PEGGY GISH

Peggy Gish went to Iraq as an attempt to prevent war. But on March 20, 2003, the bombs began falling on Baghdad. In her book, Gish recounts the moving story of Christian Peacemaker Teams' (CPT) work in Iraq, before, during, and after the 2003 war and occupation. Told as her personal story, Gish makes real the story of prisoner abuse, the character of the Iraqi people, and a passionate vision for peace.

From the fall of 2002 to the spring of 2004, Gish chronicles her Iraq experience, including a brief "Postscript." Here are stories of sleeping in a tent during bomb attacks, villages surrounded in razor wire, being deported out of Iraq, fighting for justice for Iraqi prisoners, being robbed, creating relationships with Iraqi citizens, and through it all seeking the way of Christ's peace.

An excerpt from Chapter 1:

"In just twenty minutes, we will begin our preparation for landing." These words from the aircraft's loudspeaker jolted me out of my sleep. We would soon be reaching Amman, Jordan, the first step of our journey to Baghdad. Travelling with me were twelve other people from the United States and Canada. This interesting mix of people included teachers, pastors, social workers, a nurse, an archaeologist, a filmmaker, and media specialists, ranging in age from twenty-four to seventy-seven. This was the first Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegation to Iraq. It was Thursday, October 24, 2002, and there was a threat of war.

I was the leader of this delegation, but I had never been to Jordan or Iraq. . . . Shadowy scenes from the past six months race through my head, reminding me of how I had gotten to Iraq on such an incredible journey.

Peggy Gish is a long-time peace and social justice activist from southern Ohio. She has served as a social worker in rural Indiana and inner city Chicago, as co-director of the Appalachian Peace and Justice Network, as a conflict management trainer, and a community mediator. Since 1995, Gish has been involved with Christian Peace Teams in the West Bank and Iraq.

Romans (BELIEVERS CHURCH BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES)

BY JOHN E. TOEWS

"I have waited a long time for this commentary! Until now, few commentaries have thoroughly embraced the 'emerging paradigm,' which seeks to read Romans in its original historical and social context. Even less has percolated into the life of the church at large. John E. Toews' commentary fills that gap." -Reta Halteman Finger, author of Paul and the Roman House Churches

"In the believers' church the book of Romans has always held a central place. Toews makes it possible for all thinking Christians to understand Romans. That 'strange warming of the heart,' renewal of the mind, empowering of the will, and obedient faith all come together in this book. The interpreters of the believers' church have come of age." - William Klassen, University of Waterloo, Ontario

This readable commentary is for all who seek more fully to understand the original message of Scripture and its meaning for today - Sunday school teachers, members of Bible study groups, students, pastors, and other seekers.

Here Over cups of tea and coffee
the sacred becomes gathered warmth.

In low-fenced backyards and playgrounds
the sacred chatters and laughs.

On black sand beaches and stretching seas
the sacred shines.

Under cool ferns and green puriri
the sacred is uncovered.

In conflicts and misunderstandings
the sacred waits to be revealed.

On barefoot journeys of pilgrims
walks the sacred.

The pot of the world simmers with the sacred
Take off the lid!

- Anne Powell, *Overcoming Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand*

John E. Toews has a rich professional career in teaching biblical studies and serving as an academic dean and president at various Mennonite colleges and seminaries.

On Jordan's Stormy Banks Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy

BY JAMES E. BRENNEMAN

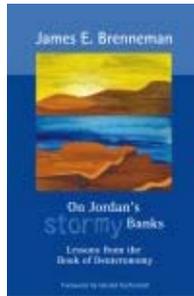
"James E. Brenneman's study guide provides a wonderful window into Deuteronomy, and how it can and does address critical crossroads of life." -Gerald Gerbrandt, President, Canadian Mennonite University

"In this penetrating yet accessible study guide, Brenneman opens the wicket gate for any pilgrims desiring to deepen their understanding of the structure, history, and theology of the book of Deuteronomy." -Paul Keim, Professor of Bible, Goshen College

Deuteronomy is perhaps the last book in Scripture that most Bible readers select for in-depth study. However, the book of Deuteronomy holds many of the levers for understanding the entire biblical corpus and has even been described as the theological centre of Scripture. *On Jordan's Stormy Banks* explores these claims, as well as how Deuteronomy addresses our deepest human longings.

For all those who have ever stood on the far shore of life's river banks, forever casting a wishful eye to some promised land, this book offers a bridge of hope. James E. Brenneman, influenced by his own travels and travails through the Sinai desert, guides readers across the spiritually barren, dangerous, silent void of life's desert-wanderings. With humour and honesty, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks* walks the in-between spaces of life to the river's edge and encounters with God.

James E. Brenneman is lead pastor of Pasadena Mennonite Church, a congregation he helped found in 1987. He teaches Hebrew Bible at the Episcopal Theological School at Claremont (California).



Eyes At The Window

BY EVIE YODER MILLER,
Good Books, 2003

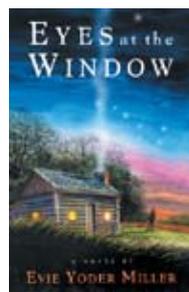
Not many novels have been reviewed in our newsletter but this historical one about the Amish is a worthy exception. Evie Yoder Miller has produced an excellent portrait of nineteenth-century Amish life in the United States. She "examines a close-knit community of Amish pioneers from 1810-1861 as they settle the western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio frontiers."

The story unfolds around the murder of an Amish baby. An Amish man, the baby's uncle, is accused and put under the ban for this incident. The novel looks at how individuals throughout the fifty years covered in the book are affected by these actions. Issues of judgement, church discipline, family ties, friendship, and forgiveness are dealt with in the storyline.

An Amish crime novel? Yes, slower in pace than most crimes novels I have read but just as interesting. It looks at how "crime" affects all the parties it touches, both victims and offenders.

Miller uses the reflections of eight key characters to tell the story. She does a good job of developing each character and giving them their distinctive voices. This story-telling technique reminds me of *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver where family members tell the story.

The Amish practice of applying the "ban" to wayward members is central to the story. It is looked at from many different perspectives – church leaders, family members, church members, and the banned person



COME DOWN TO EARTH!!

MILITARY DISPLAYS AND PAGEANTS which are intended to prepare the minds of the people for war are occasioned by the fear and greed of peoples and nations. MORAL ISSUES cannot be decided by preparations for war, which must cause international conflicts with their tragic accompaniments of ECONOMIC LOSS, DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN LIFE, and MORAL DEGRADATION.

Our CHRISTIAN FAITH requires us to acknowledge all men as our brothers and to love our enemies. Under no circumstances can MILITARY METHODS be justified on Christian grounds. We have RENOUNCED WAR and invite ALL CHRISTIANS AND MEN OF GOOD WILL to do the same.

We further believe that OUR COUNTRY should lay down its arms; declare its willingness to cooperate with all other countries on the basis of FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL and a willingness to SHARE OUR POSSESSIONS; and that the true work of citizens is the building of character and co-operation, both individually and nationally.

Issued by-
THE CHRISTIAN PACIFIST SOCIETY
(Wellington)

This pamphlet was produced and distributed during the air force display and military tattoo at Rongotai Airport, Wellington in June 1938. This protest was the coming of age of the Christian Pacifist Society as an activist organisation. (*A Question of Faith*, 22)

himself. It raises boundary questions about who is "in" the community and who is "out".

Some may think questions about banning are just for the Amish but recently I read about Catholic bishops in the US discussing whether or not Catholic politicians who support abortion should be refused the sacraments. Others want the Methodist Church in the US to excommunicate President Bush for initiating the war against Iraq. What is the role of church discipline today and how should we carry it out?

A helpful glossary of German and Pennsylvania Dutch words is provided at the back of the book. Miller also does a good job of explaining Amish practices like bundling and "brauching" in the context of the story. People who know nothing or very little about Amish culture can learn through a good story rather than a tourist book.

Miller shows us that the Amish are basically human like the rest of us. They have faults, dreams, doubts, and idiosyncrasies like people everywhere. This may surprise and disappoint those who have only an idealized picture of the Amish but I think Miller honours the Amish and their way of life through this portrayal. Warts and all, there is still a simplicity about Amish life that is very attractive and comes through in the book.

MSH

Helpful Church Conflict Websites

The Alban Institute

An ecumenical, interfaith organization founded in 1974, supporting congregations through consulting services, research, book publishing, and educational seminars
<http://www.alban.org/>

Congregational Resource Guide/ Peacemaking Without Division

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/PWD/pl.asp>

Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part One

BY RICHARD D. DOBBINS

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/PWD/pl.asp>

Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part Three

Part Two does not seem to be online. There is this editor's note: "See spring and summer 1998 issues of *Enrichment* for Part 1 and Part 2."

http://ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199804/086_managing_conflict.cfm

The Mediation Bookstore: Church Conflict and Mediation

A good display of church conflict books.

<http://www.tnmediators.com/bookstore/churchmediation.shtml>

Understanding Church Conflict: A Bible Study

<http://www.teal.org.uk/conflict/conflict1.htm>

Conflict Resolution: A view from level IV

<http://www.teal.org.uk/conflict/resolution.htm>

The Slippery Slope: Staying on Top of Conflict

<http://www.peacemakerministries.org/html/ss.htm>

Transforming Your Church: Cultivating a Culture of Peace™

http://www.hispeace.org/html/church_COP.htm

Resources for Resolving Conflict

A non-profit evangelical, biblically-based Christian ministry dedicated to assisting church congregations, ministries, and families learn how to reduce strife and experience God's full potential in their ministries and relationships.

<http://www.rrcinc.org/home.htm>

The Clergy Leadership Institute

Our mission is to integrate Theological Reflection with Organizational Psychology in our training of clergy in the pursuit of ministry effectiveness.

<http://www.clergyleadership.com/>

Appreciative Inquiry Resources

<http://www.clergyleadership.com/clergy/ai-resources.html>

Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory

This free online survey will calculate your preferred method of dealing with conflict

<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/conflictstyle/index.html>

Styles of Conflict Management

<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/conflictstyle/styles.html>

Conflict: How Do YOUth Respond?

Leader's Guide - for Grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12

<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/conflictyouth/leader.html>

Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love: Commitments in Times of Disagreement

<http://peace.mennolink.org/agree.html>

MennoLink Books: Conflict Transformation

<http://www.mennolink.org/books/conflicttransformation.html>

Constructive Conversations about Challenging Times: A Guide to Community Dialogue Version 3.0

http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/resources/resource_process.asp

Just Peace: Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation

US United Methodist site where the following guide can be downloaded:

"Engage Conflict Well: A Guide To Prepare Yourself and Engage Others in Conflict Transformation"

<http://www.justpeaceumc.org/home.htm>

Mennonite Conciliation Service

Mennonite Conciliation Service is a network of individuals committed to transforming conflict. Staff and practitioners throughout the United States respond to requests for information and assistance.

<http://www.mcc.org/us/peaceandjustice/mcs.html>

Church conflict: It's inevitable, but we can avoid the big bite

Issue of *The Lutheran* dedicated to church conflict; includes a "healthy congregation" article by Peter Steinke.

<http://www.thelutheran.org/9711/page8.html>

The Lutheran

Study Guide: Church Conflict

<http://www.thelutheran.org/study/churchconflict.html>

The Pastor's Role in Managing Church Conflict by Marlin E. Thomas

<http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1167>

Developing The Art of Gracious Disagreement: Surviving Church Conflict

<http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/q0906/q0906.html>

Mennonite Brethren Herald, April 28, 2000

Church conflict resolution covenant / Dealing with the difficult member/ How to Confront/ Ideas about resolving conflict in churches/Nice churches don't fight (healthy churches do)

<http://old.mbherald.com/39-09/covenant.html>

Journey Toward Forgiveness

The documentary *Journey Toward Forgiveness*, chronicles several stories of people at different stages of forgiveness. Some are not even ready to forgive, and others have been on a lifelong trek towards that goal. This website augments the stories from the documentary to give you practical advice, inspiration, and resources for facing forgiveness issues in your own life.

<http://journeytowardforgiveness.com/>

Books on Forgiveness

<http://www.atasnaz.org/christianvirtueres.html#anchor7>

The UK Anabaptist Network Website

Among other useful information, you can find articles from past issues of *Anabaptism Today* by authors like Alan and Eleanor Kreider, Chris Marshall, and Stuart Murray. <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/>

The question is not, do we go to church; the question is, have we been converted. The crux of Christianity is not whether or not we give donations to popular charities but whether or not we are really committed to the poor.
- Joan Chittester, OSB

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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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