



ON THE ROAD

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THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

MARK AND MARY HURST

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

What does mission look like in 21st century Australia? This is the question a conference called "Re-imagining God and Mission Within Australian Cultures" (<http://www.missionstudies.org/au/>) will tackle in Melbourne 26-30 September. This Australian Missiology Conference is taking place at Whitley College and will have a few Kiwi voices represented too. Ross Langmead, Professor of Missiology at Whitley College and Director of the School of World Mission and an AAANZ member is the conference convener.

A number of people from the AAANZ network will be attending the conference and at least four are presenting papers. We decided to feature two papers (without their footnotes) in this issue of **ON THE ROAD**. (All the papers can be viewed at the conference website.) A book edited by Ross will emerge from the conference but we wanted to give our readers a foretaste of this missiological feast.

Bessie Pereira, Director of OIKOS Australia, a ministry encouraging Home Churches (www.oikos.org.au), is presenting a paper entitled "It's back to the future for the church - the force is with us!" Bessie is a long-time member of the AAANZ executive committee and presently serves as Vice President, Membership Secretary and

public officer. We take pleasure in sharing her passion for mission through home churches.

Mark is presenting a paper called "Walking in the Resurrection: An Anabaptist Approach to Mission in Australia." Faithful readers of **ON THE ROAD** will recognize themes (and even snippets of articles) that have appeared in these pages over the past ten years. This paper gave Mark the opportunity to pull these themes together for a new audience.

The other major piece in this issue is Doug Hynd's review of **Colossians Remixed**, an important book for our time. Doug is currently the AAANZ representative for the ACT and has served as President, Vice President, and AAANZ newsletter editor.

Quotations from **Colossians Remixed** will be found throughout this issue. The authors like the writings of the American prophet Wendell Berry and quote him often throughout their book. Berry is the author of more than forty books of fiction, poetry, and essays on rural society, economy, and heritage. He lives on a farm in his native Henry County, Kentucky. We decided to share with you some of his wisdom in the form of two of his well known poems and an announcement about his latest book.

On The Road

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

Walking In The Resurrection: An Anabaptist Approach to Mission in Australia

MARK HURST

A 2004 survey found that “40% of Australians never go to church, and another 18.5% go less than once a year, which seems to be nearly the same thing as never, and another 9.5% go at least once a year - presumably token efforts for Easter and Christmas”. Close to 70% of Australians are strangers to the church. Another survey carried out recently for the Bible Society examining how they can get their message out more successfully in Australia found that it is safe to talk about Jesus, but don't mention the church. Recent news stories of paedophile priests only fuel this negative image of the church which is a hindrance for Christians doing mission in Australia. The church is viewed as irrelevant. It does not present a meaningful alternative to what is on offer in the rest of Australian society.

Crosby, Stills, and Nash sing a song about visiting Winchester Cathedral in England where they sum up the view of many:

“Open up the gates of the church and let me out of here!
Too many people have lied in the name of Christ
For anyone to heed the call.
So many people have died in the name of Christ
That I can't believe it all.”

Sir Alan Walker found this attitude to be prevalent during his years of evangelistic work in Australia. He found that the tactic of bringing people into a church building to “hear the gospel” did not work. He said:

“The majority of Australians have lost all contact with the Christian church. They will no more enter a church building than I would think of entering a brothel or a racecourse...I am convinced true evangelism within church buildings is almost impossible, for only Christians will come. There must be a going out to the people. If the mass of people is to be reached, the proclamation of the church must get beyond the God-box.”

Christians have, for the most part, been their own worst enemies when it comes to mission. They have not lived up to the message they proclaim. The lives of Christians differ very little from their non-Christian neighbours. Mission strategies aiming to “bring them in” to the church building have failed. I am proposing mission where the church, the people of God, is “walking in the resurrection” – modelling a new life that is alternative, attractive, and articulate. I will draw from the Anabaptist tradition to illustrate this type of mission.

The view of mission I am using in this paper is a holistic one similar to the Luke 4:18-19 vision talked about by Jesus: “...to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” It is a Jubilee mission sharing in both word and deed the message of God's *shalom* – wholeness, salvation, well-being, and peace. It sees reconciliation and peace as central to the gospel and mission. “There is no evangelical and missional way of speaking of Christ that is worthy of him that does not come to terms with the radical spiritual, social, and even cosmic dimensions of peace.”

Anabaptist Christians have been described as people of the third way, neither Catholic nor Protestant. An early Anabaptist confession of faith called for people “who desire to walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The concept of “walking in the resurrection” was arrived at by putting together the oft-quoted passages of 1 Peter 1:3 (resurrection and new birth), 1 Peter 3:21 (resurrection and a good conscience) and the references of Paul “to walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4) and to be buried and raised with Christ (Colossians 2:12). To walk in the resurrection meant putting away the old person of sin and putting on the new

person of holiness; it meant living the life of love toward all people.

Anabaptism was born in the turbulent 16th century Protestant Reformation era. Anabaptists felt others did not go far enough in reforming the church. The church should be made up of people living changed lives. The Anabaptists insisted on separation of church and state, commitment to adult or believers baptism, emphasis on discipleship (*nachfolge*, following after Jesus) and congregational accountability, the non-swearing of oaths, and rejection of the use of force.

Anabaptists left the state churches, or were thrown out, and even though they were heavily persecuted, they spread their message as zealous missionaries. “Ernst Troeltsch underscores the Anabaptists' drive for missionary expansion in these words: ‘The whole of Central Europe was soon covered with a network of Anabaptist communities, loosely connected with each other, who all practiced a strictly Scriptural form of worship.’”

“The successes...in the spread of their faith were aided by the Anabaptist manner of life...Amid the general corruption of morals of the sixteenth century a group of convinced Christians were living out the ethical principles of the gospel in daily life. There is no doubt that the exemplary behaviour of many Anabaptists gave a strong emphasis to their word-of-mouth appeals, and preached more loudly than the exegetically and theologically correct sermons of many a pastor.”

In other words they were fair dinkum. Their lives matched their message. They provided a model of what living a new life looks like.

“There can be no evangelistic call addressed to a person inviting him [or her] to enter into a new kind of fellowship and learning if there is not such a body of persons, again distinct from the totality of society, to whom he can come, and with and from whom he can learn. In other words, the prerequisite for personal change is a transformed context into which to enter...The mission of the church is first and foremost to be and remain the ‘peculiar people’ that God has called us to be.”

Crosby, Stills, and Nash complain in the song above that Christians have “lied and died” in the name of Christ. The message has not matched the medium. Jesus the peacemaker has been lost in a Christendom going to war against God's enemies – even when those enemies are other Christians, like the Anabaptists in the 16th century.

The Anabaptists distinguished between the “sweet” and “bitter” Christ. From their perspective, the Reformers preached “a sinful sweet Christ”, who does not lead to a “betterment of life.” Hans Denck summarized the Anabaptist ethos of Christian discipleship well: “... none may truly know (Christ) unless he follows after him with his life. And no one can follow after him except in so far as one previously knows him.” Anabaptists tried to recover the peacemaking of Jesus and the early church. To follow Jesus in discipleship meant being peacemakers like him. When Jesus disarmed Peter he disarmed his followers for all time. All killing has ceased. Love is to replace hate, good is to overcome evil.

Pilgram Marpeck was one 16th century Anabaptist committed to this kind of non-violence. He thought of the church as an outpost of God's love whose mission was to actively radiate that love out into the world. “In Marpeck's understanding, the followers of Jesus would not isolate themselves from the world as if trying to defend a citadel of purity. Rather, they would open the windows and the doors, show forth God's love to the world, and invite unbelievers to come in.”

Baptist pastor and theologian Thorwald Lorenzen explains what mission based on love looks like today:

“Evangelism, justice and peace are the structures of love. Commitment to a mission of love implies, firstly, that we overcome the unfortunate division between evangelism and social action. The recently founded Micah Network (2001) of evangelical mission has suggested the helpful concept of “integral mission”:

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. (Micah Declaration)...

Non-violence is an essential dimension to the Jesus Story. We can't have Jesus without it. A modern theology of mission will therefore emphasise non-violence, and thereby pave the way towards the day when politicians will have to solve human conflicts without the instrument of war.

Mission, yes! But it must be the mission of love”

John Howard Yoder, an Anabaptist ethicist and mission theologian, agreed that peacemaking should be an essential part of mission. “...the recovery of the peace message in mission would dictate a missional posture and practices appropriate to the message. Centuries of colonial domination by Christian nations had built walls that old ways of mission could not surmount. Yoder believed that the only possible way left was to ‘get under the wall.’ It takes more people and it takes more work than going over the top, but this is our calling and this is the place of our peace witness in evangelism. The cross simply cannot be proclaimed from a position of domination and violence, but from that of service and humility, which he claimed, is a distinctive Free Church way of carrying out mission.”

Mission from an Anabaptist perspective takes seriously the brokenness in the world and that experienced by many people on a regular basis. “Brokenness runs deep. It's a fact of life. The way things are. And, for all practical purposes, the way they've always been... Brokenness is universal...Brokenness is comprehensive” – personal, religious, social, and cultural.

Mennonite missiologist James R. Krabill sums up an Anabaptist theology of mission this way. He says, “God has a plan to make things right:

For Paul, rather than “flying the flag of empire,” the church is a community in refusal of the empire which bears the image of another Lord in its daily life...A split-vision worldview that divides faith from life, church from culture, theology from economics, prayer from politics and worship from everyday work will always render Christian faith irrelevant to broad sociocultural forces. And that is exactly what the empire wants - a robust, piously engaging private faith that will never transgress the public square. Allow religion to shape private imagination, but leave the rest of life, the public and dominant imagination, to the empire. (Colossians Remixed, 95)

1. Mission originates in God's loving, comprehensive plan to restore peace to the universe.

2. Jesus is the means by which God intends to restore peace.

3. The message of Jesus is the gospel of peace.

4. The primary messenger of the peace plan is the church.

5. The church's task is to announce Jesus, the one God has sent to restore peace.

6. The goal of announcing Jesus is to gain ground for God's peace plan in the world.

7. The methods used in announcing Jesus must be consistent with the gospel message of peace.

8. God's peace plan in Jesus is comprehensive, for every person, tribe and nation.

9. Announcing God's peace plan in Jesus will not always be well received.

10. God has promised Holy Spirit power to the church to strengthen and sustain her in faithfully announcing the peace plan until Jesus returns.”

“The primary messenger of the peace plan is the church.” What kind of church? **The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective**, a modern Anabaptist faith statement, says this:

“We believe that the church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God. Thus, we are given a foretaste of the kingdom that God will one day establish in full. The church is to be a spiritual, social, and economic reality, demonstrating now the justice, righteousness, love and peace of the age to come. The church does this in obedience to its Lord and in anticipation that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord.”

Norman Shanks from the Iona Community in Scotland gives another description of the kind of church needed for mission. His view goes very well with Anabaptist ones.

“The Church's vocation in each and every locality is to be a worshipping, healing, learning, serving community, faithfully living by the values of the kingdom, modelling and embodying a counter-cultural vision, looking and reaching beyond itself with a wider vision, to discover the light and love of God in engagement with the life of the world, standing up and speaking out against all that diminishes and disempowers humanity. In so doing it will dream and explore; it will be open, flexible and ready to take risks; it will be generous, hospitable and ready to celebrate; it will not be a ghetto but keen to co-operate and engage; it will be a transforming community – influencing others for good and being transformed itself in the process; it will be resilient and persistent, however hard the way, and it will be marked by joy and an eagerness to celebrate.”

The cultural context of the church also needs to be considered. “Christians living in modern culture face a fundamental challenge. That challenge is to learn to think about their culture in missional terms.” The church in Australia should be studying the Australian

culture asking where it can “co-operate and engage” and where it needs to be “a transforming community – influencing others for good.”

Some Christians are bemoaning the loss of status and influence in society for the church in this post-Christendom age. They forget that “Jesus was the outsider who became the insider without surrendering his outsider status. He never relaxed this bifocal stance.”

“The faithful church living out God’s reign cannot feel completely at home in any culture; yet in light of God’s basileia the church is responsible to witness to God’s saving intention in every society...there is no biblical or theological basis for the territorial distinction between mission and evangelization. To accede to this dichotomy is to invite the church to ‘settle in’ and be at home. The church is most at risk where it has been present in a culture for a long period of time so that it no longer conceives its relation to culture in terms of missionary encounter. The church remains socially and salvifically relevant only so long as it is in redemptive tension with culture.”

A church “walking in the resurrection” will be living a life that is alternative, particularly in this age of terrorism and violence. Many Christians would agree with the U.S. columnist who said after the September 11 attacks: “We know who the homicidal maniacs are. They are the ones cheering and dancing right now. We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.” Christianity and violence have been so thoroughly linked that some see no problem with this sentiment. But a church modelling an alternative will reject this linkage.

1 Peter 3:8-16 is a good summary of the Christian community’s alternative way of living. “Have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” (3:8) Not qualities useful in the war on terror! “Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing.” (3:9)

“In becoming the kind of Christian community 1 Peter envisions, the church is both witness and servant in the world. It becomes the sign of the reign of God. It speaks of what can be, of what God intended to be, and of what God, by grace, has made possible.”

“Keep your tongues from evil...turn away from evil and do good...seek peace and pursue it.” (3:10-11) “1 Peter changes the verbs ‘seek’ and ‘pursue’ to third person from the second person form in the Septuagint; these actions are part of the mission of the people of God. The pursuit of peace expresses their living hope and their participation in the new people of God...First Peter helps us understand the missional and peace-pursuing implications of that hope by making its application concrete in encounter with an unredeemed world.”

Verse 14 gives an important message for our time – “Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated.” Much of the current “war on terror” is being driven by fear, particularly fear of the “other” whether they are our next door neighbour or a stranger. “Be alert, not alarmed!” is a fear-based government campaign. An alternative is to not be controlled by fear but be driven by love; to respond with hospitality.

A film crew researching for a telemovie about the September 11 hijackers visited the neighbourhood in Germany where some of the hijackers lived for awhile and planned their attacks. One of the actors, trying to understand these men and

trying to get into his role, came to this insight about Western culture:

“Nobody cares who you are, no neighbours say hi. We are not used to this in the Middle East. I often wonder what would have happened if someone had simply welcomed Mohammed Atta [one of the hijackers], said: ‘Hi, here’s a pie I baked earlier. Would you like some?’”

The alternative life of the Christian community 1 Peter talks about is a disciplined life of peacemaking that involves daily developing these Jesus qualities –love, lack of fear, hope, hospitality, etc. - and practicing them in a way that gets the attention of people around us – for good and bad. Remember, Jesus lived a life of “doing good” and it got him killed. So this calls for costly action on the church’s part. “Even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed.” (3:14)

Marva Dawn is an author who writes much about this way of being. “...the Christian community must be an alternative society—offering its gifts of different ways to think and speak and be and behave to a world that is truly desperate for them.” She says, “Lately I have been emphasizing the pun that to live this

way is to recover true *altar-nativity*—the presenting of our church bodies as a living sacrifice on the altar (actually the Greek word means burnt offering in the invitation of Romans 12:1) and then our rebirth into the new life of Christ in us.”

But, Dawn argues, we must not become so alternative that we have no contact with the rest of society. We must also be “parallel.”

“In the midst of our post-Christian culture, the true churches must be a...sort of parallel society. We gather together in worship to speak our language, to read our narratives of God at work, to sing authentic hymns of the faith in all kinds of styles, to chant and pour out our prayers until we know the truth so well that we can go out to the world around us and invite that world to share this truth with us. In

our worship, we are formed by biblical narratives that tell a different story from that of the surrounding culture. Since we thereby come to know the truth that sets us free, we are eager to share that with our neighbours; thus our worship must equip us for that mission with a deep vision of the extravagant splendour of God. Rather than being “a vendor of religious goods and services” that caters to people’s tastes, the Church is called to be “a body of people sent on a mission.”

We need both words - alternative and parallel - for describing the church. To be parallel will deter us from being so alternative that we do not relate to our neighbours; to be alternative prevents our parallelism from moving closer and closer to modes of life alien to the kingdom of God. Rather than becoming enculturated and entrapped by the world’s values of materialistic and experiential consumerism, of narcissistic self-importance and personal taste, of solitary superficiality, and of ephemeral satisfaction, members of Christ’s body choose his simple life of sharing, his willingness to suffer for the sake of others, his communal vulnerability, and his eternal purposes. When our worship gives us continual hearing of, and deep reflection on, God’s Word, songs and prayers that nurture discipleship, and new visions of God’s appointment for us to bear fruit, then we will gain God’s heart for our mission and ministry of communicating the Christian story, of enfolding our neighbours in God’s love, of choosing deliberately to live out the alternative Churchbeing of the people of God’s kingdom.

Sociologists recognize that any alternative way of life that is substantively different from the larger society around it and that

May it be that we raise up a generation of social misfits, because to “fit into” this culture, to find your place of comfort in it, is to be accommodated to the empire...the goal is...to raise up children who are subversive to the empire because they are subjects of the kingdom. (Colossians Remixed, 218-19)

wants to maintain itself needs a language, customs, habits, rituals, institutions, procedures, practices that uphold and nurture a clear vision of how it is different and why that matters. Are we as Christians committed to the alternative way of life described in the Scriptures and incarnated in Christ, so that we are willing to invest ourselves diligently in order to transmit this valued way of life to our children and neighbours? If so, our worship cannot be too much like the surrounding culture or it will be impossible to teach altar-nativity.”

A church “walking in the resurrection” will be living a life that is attractive. Going against the flow will get people’s attention. Living a Jesus lifestyle in a time of war will make you stand out. 1 Peter 3:15 assumes that people will look at Christians and see people who are hopeful in a time when hope is in short supply. They will “demand from you an accounting of the hope that is in you.”

People are hungry for hope. They long for security and a place to belong. They want community. If the church is living a truly alternative life that finds hope, security, and community in the new life of God’s kingdom, people will be attracted to it. The church will not have to dream up campaigns to “get people in”. People will ask where the church’s hope comes from.

Clarence Jordan explains it in terms of being a “demonstration plot” of the kingdom. He said this:

“...if Jesus could make Simon the Zealot and Matthew the [tax collector] walk down the main street in Jerusalem, holding hands and calling one another “Brother,” the God Movement was here! This was to be a demonstration plot – not so much a preaching platform, but a demonstration plot that the God Movement was under way.

Jesus was trying to make a concrete, living demonstration of the God movement...He was not talking about the Kingdom of God in an abstract sense. He was saying, “The Kingdom of God is in your midst.” Where? “Right here. Here they are. Here are the fellows. This is the God Movement – right in your midst – and you are being confronted with it.” The Christian movement resorted more to fact than to argument. Those people were the direct evidence of the “kingdom” – the God Movement.”

In this concrete expression of the kingdom of God that the church lives out, it has something the world needs. Jordan says:

“It seems to me that we Christians have an idea here that the world is tremendously in need of. When we’re tottering fearfully on the brink of utter annihilation, looking so desperately for hope from somewhere, walking in deep darkness, looking for one little streak of light, do not we Christians have some light? Can’t we say “Sure, we know the way. It’s the way of love and peace. We shall not confront the world with guns in our hands and bombs behind our backs. We shall confront the world without fear, with utter helplessness except for the strength of God.”

A church “walking in the resurrection” will be living a life that is articulate. When people ask about why the church lives the way it does, the church should be ready to explain why it is different, why it is hopeful and why it does not go with the war making flow. The church community needs to be articulate about its faith and why it makes a difference in the way its people live. But it should be done “with gentleness and reverence (respect)”. People do not like Christians who “Bible bash” them. Do not give people answers to questions they are not asking. When the church community demonstrates a life that is alternative and people are attracted to it, its members should be ready to

articulate why they are the way they are. Earn the right to speak to others by the way you live.

Nelson Kraybill, president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, said recently in a North American church conference that Mennonites should not be like the “piano man” in Britain, who was found several months ago wet and dressed in a suit. Since then he has not spoken a word but has demonstrated his ability as a virtuoso pianist. We want not only to be virtuoso Christians but to also speak of Jesus, who empowers us, Kraybill said.

A Dutch pastor visited the seminary in the past year and told Kraybill that in a generation the Mennonite church in the Netherlands had gone from 50,000 members to only 9,000. Asked why, a Dutch woman said, “We kept the deeds but lost the words.” Now there is a renewal in the Netherlands, and some churches are growing.

Alan Kreider, a long-time Anabaptist missionary in England, wrote an article entitled “Anabaptist Christianity:

Revived and Relevant.” He was writing about Europe when he said: “We live in a time when uncertain post-Christendom European believers are looking for insight to things that Christendom has rejected. They are looking to the margins to find help for their future...Anabaptism represents a native European vision that was for many centuries despised and persecuted – but that has survived to be relevant in this hour. It was persecuted because Christendom had rightly seen it as a vision that was uncomfortable in a setting of coercive Christianity. The believers’ church was always one of choice – Jesus

called his followers to come after him freely. We are now in a period when force no longer works. European leaders could never coerce people to believe, and now they are finding that they can’t coerce people to attend church or give money either. So a growing number of European Christian leaders are seeing Anabaptism with its roots in the persecuted, voluntary early church, as a model for the future of the Christian church in post-Christendom.”

Australia is not Europe but the church models that got transplanted here came from European Christendom stock. In recent years, a variety of American church models have been added. But Kreider’s remarks hold relevance for the Australian scene too. He talks about the particular Anabaptist ideas that he sees as relevant today:

- Individualistic Europeans [and Australians] are really struggling to find viable forms of community.
- People are increasingly frustrated and baffled by problems of violence that run deep in society and in churches.
- But most important in Anabaptist Christianity is the centrality of Jesus.

A recent summary of Anabaptist identity makes three statements. *Jesus is the centre of our faith. Community is the centre of our life. And, reconciliation is the centre of our work.* Anabaptists try to hold together evangelism and peacemaking in their reconciliation work. The good news of the gospel is that God has reconciled us to God, to each other, and to all of creation. Jesus presents a model for living, for dreaming, and transforming individuals and societies. “Jesus speaks directly to the materialism, violence, and individualism” of Australian society. Needed now are individuals and churches who take his message seriously and live it out in creative ways; “walking in the resurrection”; being alternative, attractive, and articulate.

Only the nonideological, embracing, forgiving and shalom-filled life of a dynamic Christian community formed by the story of Jesus will prove the gospel to be true and render the idolatrous alternatives fundamentally implausible. (Colossians Remixed, 114)

'It's back to the future for the church - the force is with us!' - Home Church as Missional and Marketplace plantings of 'church' in the Australian culture

BESSIE PEREIRA

Our understanding of God influences the way we 'do church'. Conversely, the way we 'do church' can influence the way we view God and mission.

Introduction

Some new ways of church are developing in the Australian culture that the earliest church would recognise. Traditional churches in some areas are being challenged to radically change; while for many Christians, moving aside from denominational structures has been the only way forward. For increasing numbers of people, becoming 'Home Church' in various forms is a way forward.

'Home Church' is a generic term referring to a lounge-room sized gathering that is everything that can be understood as church in relation to its life and witness. We say it is a generic term because it is not the venue that is descriptive, but rather, the way of being church in small, non-hierarchical, fully participatory, gatherings based on relationship with God and one another. Many Home Churches do not meet in homes, but are to be found on cattle stations, high rise flats, legal offices, corporate board rooms, cafes and pubs for instance. These small gatherings of church easily manage to be cross generational and cross cultural in many instances. The Sunday/Monday divide is broken down as real life is shared deeply.

Various reasons 'home churches' are emerging can be identified, but throughout this phenomenon people are being divested of unnecessary and unhelpful 'baggage' that hinders the development of church and mission.

Looking for clues in the earliest church

It is interesting to look briefly at the factors that influenced the dynamism of the earliest Church especially considering the rate of expansion in the first three centuries, as a backdrop to what we see happening globally in the Home Church movement today. Some factors can indicate reasons for the radical change in church in our day, but can also give us pointers for the future of this movement in our land. It also serves to give a Biblical basis for what we see happening.

By 'earliest church' I am referring to that of the first three centuries when, by and large the church met as small gatherings in homes. In 313 A.D, Constantine legalised Christianity with the Edict of Milan and began to institute changes that have affected the church to this day. He facilitated the establishment of a professional hierarchical clergy system modelled after Roman government and military systems, the construction of special church buildings, and a political state-church merger. Thus 'Cathedral' Christianity was born. Before this time, most scholars agree that the church met in the homes of its members. 'The early church minimized the complexity of its forms in order to maximize the effectiveness of its functions'.

From the book of Acts, we see Christians alive in the reality of the Risen Lord, operating with immediacy in listening and obedience to Him. No wonder the 'Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved'.

The life and witness of the church was based on the economic and social building block of society - the *oikos*. *Oikos* is the Greek word in the Bible for 'household' and included not only the family, but also wider family members, servants, slaves

and clients. The *oikos*, with its network of relationships already existing, and the inclusion of new Christians needing discipling, was the setting for the grassroots 'theology' of church that emerged based on the 'one anothers' we read in the New Testament. Mutual acceptance, admonition, agreement, building up, compassion, concern, devotion, encouragement, fellowship, forgiveness, greeting, harmony, honour, hospitality, humility, instruction, kindness, love, peaceability, prayer, service, submission and tolerance are all themes we see evidenced.

A recurring theme we find in the New Testament church is couched in familial language. For a thorough treatment of this see Robert Banks' ***Paul's Idea of Community***. Terms such as 'household of faith' and 'household of God' refer to nothing less than God's family. Words such as 'brother/s', 'beloved brother', 'fathers', 'mothers' 'children', give a picture of church life based on close and loving relationships.

This relational way of church was based on as well as influenced, the way they viewed God. Their experience of relationship with the Risen Lord Jesus, and the encouragement He gave to his followers to relate to His Father as our Father, and even 'Abba Father', gave rise to a value they placed on the presence of the same Lord in the lives of one another. And so church was built by these living stones being fitted together.

How the earliest church carried out mission

We often think of evangelism in the earliest church as new Christians 'gossiping the Gospel' from householder to householder, slave to slave, merchant to merchant, facilitated by the 'Pax Romana' and the great Roman roads aiding travel. However, whilst all that is true, Roger W. Gehring in his seminal work ***Home Church and Mission*** deals extensively with the importance of the *oikos* in the mission of the earliest church.

Gehring recognises that the term 'mission' has a broad spectrum of meanings, but he uses it in his book in the sense of 'the active effort to lead nonbelievers to faith in Jesus Christ'. He then notes three aspects of missional outreach: mission proclamation or preaching; mission through personal conversation; mission through lifestyle (missional outreach through living the Christian life). *'In this context it is clear that structural differences exist between a mission, on the one hand, in which people are sent out to take the initiative to proclaim the gospel and, on the other hand, the personal magnetism and attraction of a group of people living in the community with one another who more often than not wait for others to come to them and to ask why they are the way they are.'*

The first Christians were evangelistically active in and through their houses. The rapid expansion of the church was due to public preaching as well as believers being evangelistically fruitful in their immediate surroundings through personal conversations and through an attractive Christian lifestyle.

The close fellowship, (*koinonia*) of the earliest Christians enabled them to get to know one another, to grow close and connect on a deeper level. They were able to go beyond the superficial and cultivate deeper personal relationships, and support one another in a very concrete way, even in material matters.

As well as having an inner impact on the lives of the believers, this form of Christianity had an outward impact into the

**Christians should feel
disjointed and out of
place in a civilization
which divinizes the
thing. (Colossians
Remixed, 168)**

world around them. Gehring quotes W. Vogler, *“The way Christians lived in community with one another in spite of their social differences, the fact that they made the needs of one the concern of all...all of this generated a power that flowed out from their community, requiring and producing a response....Moreover, these (house) groups were compellingly attractive, drawing others into their midst.”* Again Gehring makes the comment *“They stand in striking contrast to customary religious life otherwise encountered at the time, and ultimately this is one of the main reasons the first Christians were so attractive to others around them.”* He continues *“They (Home Churches) were a training ground for Christian koinonia fellowship inwardly and a showplace of Christian fellowship outwardly. This missional expansion of the gospel was due not so much to the mission-strategic initiatives of the individuals as to the powerful attraction of a Christian community actively practicing koinonia fellowship.”*

The scope of this paper does not allow me to delve deeply into the use of the *oikos* in Paul's missionary journeys. Suffice to say that Paul saw his mission field as to the whole world, and in particular to the gentiles. It is interesting to note that in the main cities he visited he established bases of operation, using existing *oikos* gatherings that became believers, and developed missional outreach from these support bases. From these support bases outward, the city itself and then the surrounding area were to be reached with the Gospel. It seems likely that Paul initially targeted householders, along with their entire household, for the gospel and to set up a base of operations in their house for local and regional mission. Paul stayed in each city long enough for a church to become self-reliant. They were then left to take responsibility to develop their own life and witness to further the work of the Great Commission.

In summary, I quote Wolfgang Simson in his racy excellent book ***Houses that Change the World***. *“The New Testament Church was a growing church, says Dr Alan Kreider, and from history we know that it kept growing for quite some time. According to an epistle to Diognetus written in the late second century, ‘Christians, day by day increase more and more.’ In the middle of the third century Origen exclaimed: ‘Multitudes of people are coming to faith.’ Ramsay MacMullen, professor of ancient history at Yale, has estimated that in each generation some 500,000 people were added to the church up until the conversion of Emperor Constantine in AD 312, when the church finally made up between 5 and 8 per cent of the population of the Roman empire.”*

From earliest times until the Reformation there have been numerous reform and renewal movements, many with a ‘Home Church’ flavour. The Donatists, Peter Waldo and the Waldensians, Francis of Assisi and the Little brothers, Anabaptist movements, the Quakers, Church of the Brethren, John Wesley and the Methodist Movement, and the Base Ecclesial Communities in countries in South America, to mention some. Many are saying that today we are seeing a new reformation. The 16th century saw the reformation based on doctrine, but are we not seeing the reformation of ‘church’ in our day?

What, then, can we glean to be helpful from the experience of the earliest Christians, if not already recognisable in what we see happening across the world today?

A thread through these movements is the earliest church emphasis that church is not buildings or programs. Church is people, and relationships must go deep so that Christians are disciplined to grow, and for the world see the evidence of the

Gospel in the quality of Christian living and not just the words that are preached. For this to happen, church gatherings need to be small.

Many of these groups would take the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and the ‘one another’ verses from the New Testament, as their guide for being disciplined to Jesus and to one another.

Another factor for many was the awareness that the church must always be in a prophetic position towards the world. In order to do this, some have had to move aside from church systems that sat comfortably with the status quo or in some cases, became state/church. The earliest church certainly had a prophetic role until it became absorbed in Imperial Rome. Some emerging Home Churches are faced with just the same issues in some countries today.

Perhaps one of the stark similarities is the fact that all Christians in Home Church type gatherings are enabled and encouraged to take an active part in the life and witness of the church. There are no observers or pew sitters in Home Church! The gifts of the Spirit are released to build the church and to witness for the growth of the Kingdom.

Interesting features such as mobility, the release of resources for mission, the fast multiplication that can happen with ease in the planting of simple churches, the cultural relevance of any given Home Church in their context, the cross generational and cross cultural aspect of Home Churches, would all make Aquilla and Priscilla feel ‘at home’.

Probably undergirding the reality of the emerging church is that the Lord said He would build His church and we are seeing the fresh initiatives of the Holy Spirit in new ways of church in our day.

...the key pathology of our time, which seduces us all, is the reduction of our imagination so that we are too numbed, satiated, and co-opted to do serious imaginative work. (Walter Brueggemann quoted in Colossians Remixed, 141)

The Global context

Firstly, while we see mega churches resourcing the church in many places in the western world, huge networks of Home Churches are emerging especially in the Third World countries, changing the focus to ‘small is beautiful’ as they impact nations. In the west also, new ways of church are increasing both within the traditional churches as well as independently of them.

We return again to Rad Zdero's recently published book **The Global House Church Movement** Chapter 4 where he gives interesting statistics of Home Churches in several countries. He writes *“...there is a massive influx into the Body of Christ through house churches. In fact, it has been suggested that there are more Christians involved in house churches around the world today than in any other kind of church.”*

The house church movement in China is huge and continued to grow under regimes that have brought persecution to the Christians who have stood apart from the restrictive ‘Three Self Patriotic Movement’ registration of churches. Many of these Christians formed what was ‘underground’ church as house churches. *“Today, Chinese house church leaders have made a commitment that, even if complete political freedom were to arrive tomorrow there would be certain aspects of church structure and function they would keep intact. Specifically, contemporary leaders have decided to: (a) encourage leaders to be mobile evangelisers and house church planters; (b) model teamwork; (c) not build any church buildings; (d) continue to have a mobile ‘tabernacle’ mentality rather than a stationary ‘temple’ mindset’ and (e) only provide financial support to travelling apostolic workers while local leaders remain volunteers.....China has for decades now been the prime modern day example of how the simplicity of house churches provides the ideal vehicle for church growth even under adverse circumstances.”*

Currently, huge movements of house churches are emerging across large areas of India, especially in the Madhya Pradesh state. Ethiopia, Cuba, Brazil are seeing unprecedented church growth through house churches. But also large networks of autonomous Home Churches are being identified in European countries such as Switzerland, Belgium and France. The U.S. and Canada are seeing amazing growth in Home Churches in the last two years and now we are hearing of the Home Church movement in New Zealand and the steep increase in the numbers of Christians moving into this way of being church. Organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Navigators and the Dove Christian Fellowship are all working in Home Church mode in their outreach activities.

Home Church is the most effective tool in evangelism across the world again in our day as it was in the earliest church.

...there is no word more offensive to a culture driven by unlimited economic growth than the word enough. (Colossians Remixed, 161)

Reinventing ‘church’ in today’s Aussie culture

There are many reasons why the Australian church is being pushed to change. The number of Christians attending traditional churches is in steep decline. The National Church Life Survey lists four main categories of people who don’t attend a church. The first category can be described as involving people having some kind of problem with the church or its people. This includes aspects such as the beliefs and morals of the churches, seeing worship services as boring or unfulfilling, bad experiences of church people and the way that churches are organised. A second category has to do with a lack of motivation. Thirdly, a lack of time and fourthly, lack of access.

For some Christians, there is a conviction that church must happen another way. Some feel their giftedness is unrecognized or stifled. Others leave churches because they feel there ‘must be something more’, while there are those who have left due to abuse or because of hurtful situations to do with church politics. Barrett of the World Christian Encyclopedia says that the largest group of Christians is those who do not attend church – ‘Out of church Christians’ he calls them.

Our present situation in Australia sees a generation (or is it two?) that have had little or nothing to do with Christianity let alone the church, and yet a real spiritual hunger is evidenced by the proliferation of New Age and non-Christian philosophies. People are not necessarily anti-God or anti-spirituality. Many are definitely anti ‘the church’ such as they view it and such as it has often been projected and has often projected itself.

The breakdown of family life, the large number of children growing up without an effective male role model, the ravages of drugs and depression are creating sub-cultures in our society that desperately need the good news of Jesus Christ. It is in these sub-cultures that we are seeing missional Home Church type groups emerging.

Church will and must change. God cannot be locked up in our buildings, programs, rites and theologies when there’s a hurting world out there crying out for a touch from the living God. In a sense we have to ‘get real’ and let go of baggage that stops us from relating to the world. In fact, the ‘back to the future’ church will be ‘out there’ rather than running programs of ‘indrag’ in the guise of ‘outreach’. We must accept that the gap between the church and the mission field is huge and people are not going to rush into our buildings and sit in our pews and subject themselves to language and culture that to them might as well belong to another planet. We have to be in the world though not of it as Jesus said. As George Barna has succinctly put it

“Christians have a responsibility to respond intelligently to the world around them. We must respond to the changes in values, beliefs, life-styles and opportunities. We must be changed by Christ Himself to be agents to change the world rather than agents changed by the world.”

How can church be truly missional in our large cities? In what ways can the diminished congregations in country areas be reinvented and resourced? How can we respond to the cry for community in a fractured society? The trend in Australian society is toward a significant increase in the number of ‘one person’ households. How then do we connect with the lonely?

Groupings in Australian society vary greatly from the ‘oikos’ of the New Testament church. While we see multiculturalism and multi-faith scenarios in our society as being somewhat similar to the setting of the earliest church, yet there are realities and pressures that provide today’s church with fresh challenges. Yet we are driven for all that, to some of the ideals of the earliest church in order to get back to simplicity, reality and relevancy.

Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost propose three overarching principles that give missional church energy and direction. The missional church is *incarnational*, not *attractional*, in its ecclesiology. By incarnational we mean it does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don’t yet know him.

The missional church is *messianic*, not *dualistic*, in its spirituality. That is, it adopts the worldview of Jesus the Messiah, rather than that of the Graeco-Roman Empire. Instead of seeing the world as divided between the sacred (religious) and profane (nonreligious), like Christ it sees the world and God’s place in it as more holistic and integrated.

The missional church adopts an *apostolic*, rather than a *hierarchical*, mode of leadership. By apostolic we mean a mode of leadership that recognises the fivefold model detailed by Paul in Ephesians 6. It abandons the triangular hierarchies of the traditional church and embraces a biblical, flat-leadership community that unleashes the gifts of evangelism, apostleship, and prophecy, as well as the currently popular pastoral and teaching gifts.

A few samples of the fresh initiatives of ‘church’ in Australia today

Israel is called to be an alternative socioeconomic witness to the empire. (Colossians Remixed, 67)

Carisbrooke Station, near Winton in western Queensland, is 78 square miles of amazing outback country. The owners, Charlie and Anne Phillott, host a ‘Home Church’ of Christians from the surrounding Stations. Issues to do with the land, laws, livestock and livelihood are shared in the context of prayer, the Word and loving relationships.

Quirindi Christian Fellowship is a group of Christians who have moved aside from the traditional church in a NSW country town, to meet regularly in the homes of the members. As well as their Sunday gatherings, they act as a bridge amongst the churches in the area holding Monday night open meetings to which Christians from the local churches regularly attend. Members are very involved with other Christian work through Kairos and Prison Fellowship as well as regular involvement with mission work in India. I could mention many more groups such as this throughout Australia.

Gathering of Christians at the Inns of Court in Brisbane. This is a weekly gathering of those in the legal profession who study the Bible together, pray and support one another in their

private and professional lives. The legal firm Khor and Burr in Market Street Melbourne pack their boardroom every Wednesday lunch hour from the neighbouring offices for a Christian gathering including worship and speakers. Many factories, corporate businesses and offices have regular Christian gatherings. It is interesting that a significant number see these gatherings as 'church' as they do not attend a traditional church on a Sunday. A huge number of such groups are springing up in the CBDs of our big cities across the nation. Billy Graham has said that the next great move of evangelistic outreach in the west will be in the marketplace.

Circle Church Network, Wesleyan Methodist Church meets in homes in various suburbs in the outer west of Melbourne as well as the CBD. Rev Dr David Wilson, former Principal of Kingsley College and now Director of Urban Encounter and a Melbourne City Councillor is the founder and facilitator of these groups. Denominational churches are working with Home Churches in new area ministry in some parts of our land. Baptists in Adelaide and Canberra and the Uniting Church in Queensland in some areas for instance.

Urban Neighbours of Hope. 2001 UNOH was commissioned as 'a missional order among the poor' by the Churches of Christ. Since 1993, they have served in Springvale among Pacific Islanders, East Timorese, Vietnamese,

Cambodians, Burmese, indigenous Australians and communities of people with mental illnesses. Much of their work is in Home Church gatherings.

Indigenous Ministry Links Australia – a non denominational mission team working in Aboriginal Communities in Cape York and Arnhem Land. They gather church in the parks, by the rivers and in the homes of the indigenous people.

Many more could of course be mentioned, but this is a cross section of the different ways church is emerging. These marvels of the Holy Spirit's initiative in building church in our nation are part of the stream of what God is doing with His church right across the globe.

We indeed live in the most exciting times of church history!

I end with a quote from Hans Kung used often by the Forge organization:

"A church which pitches its tents without constantly looking out for new horizons, which does not continually strike camp, is being untrue to its calling... (we must) play down our longing for certainty, accept what is risky, live by improvisation and experiment"

- Bessie Pereira - Director of OIKOS Australia
 - Encouraging Home Churches (in its 15th year)
www.oikos.org.au

The Mad Farmer, Flying the Flag of Rough Branch, Secedes from the Union

BY WENDELL BERRY

From the union of power and money,
 from the union of power and secrecy,
 from the union of government and science,
 from the union of government and art,
 from the union of science and money,
 from the union of ambition and ignorance,
 from the union of genius and war,
 from the union of outer space and inner vacuity,
 the Mad Farmer walks quietly away.
 There is only one of him, but he goes.
 He returns to the small country he calls home,
 his own nation small enough to walk across.
 He goes shadowy into the local woods,
 and brightly into the local meadows and croplands.
 He goes to the care of neighbors,
 he goes into the care of neighbors.
 He goes to the potluck supper, a dish from each house
 for the hunger of every house.
 He goes into the quiet of early mornings
 of days when he is not going anywhere.
 Calling his neighbors together into the sanctity of their
 lives
 separate and together
 in the one life of their commonwealth and home,
 in their own nation small enough for a story
 or song to travel across in an hour, he cries:
 Come all ye conservatives and liberals
 who want to conserve the good things and be free,

come away from the merchants of big answers,
 whose hands are metallated with power;
 from the union of anywhere and everywhere
 by the purchase of everything from everybody at the
 lowest price
 and the sale of anything to anybody at the highest price;
 from the union of work and debt, work and despair;
 from the wage-slavery of the helplessly well-employed.
 From the union of self-gratification and self-annihilation,
 secede into care for one another and for the good gifts of
 Heaven and Earth.
 Come into the life of the body, the one body
 granted to you in all the history of time.
 Come into the body's economy, its daily work,
 and its replenishment at mealtimes and at night.
 Come into the body's thanksgiving, when it knows
 and acknowledges itself a living soul.
 Come into the dance of the community, joined
 in a circle, hand in hand, the dance of the eternal
 love of women and men for one another
 and of neighbors and friends for one another.
 Always disappearing, always returning,
 calling his neighbors to return, to think again
 of the care of flocks and herds, of gardens
 and fields, of woodlots and forests and the uncut groves,
 calling them separately and together, calling and calling,
 he goes forever toward the long restful evening
 and the croak of the night heron over the river at dark.
 Amen

The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint,
 1998), pp. 162-63. (Quoted in *Colossians Remixed*, 159)

Whom Shall We Fear

JOHN MCKINNON

The recent religious vilification case in Victoria combined with the prospect of similar legislation in New South Wales has resulted in many Christians becoming worried about their liberties. Freedom to evangelise and openly teach the Bible has been taken for granted in Australia since colonization. Are we now entering into a period when Christians again are persecuted and denied these fundamental freedoms?

The Victorian case particularly focused the Christian mind on the role of Islam in the world. Combined with tales from fundamentalist Islamic countries of severe punishments for converting to Christianity the case has created a fear among Christians as to the intent of both Australian Muslims and Islamic refugees and immigrants. Terrorist activities around the world have also focused attention on Muslims and encouraged an atmosphere of suspicion and xenophobia.

How well grounded are these fears? Do we Christians really risk losing our fundamental freedoms? If so, what should our response be? How should we defend our society against such threats? Should we expect the government to favour Christianity over other religions? Should we seek to exclude other religions from our society?

In addressing these questions, we first need to consider the relationship of Christianity with the society and the state in which it exists. Jesus Christ came neither as a violent revolutionary nor as a monastic hermit. He lived a full life within his society and participated in a wide range of social and religious activities. On many occasions he was tempted to political revolution but resisted. Some of his disciples were of the Zealot party, a group dedicated to overthrowing the Romans and re-establishing a Jewish state. Jesus, however, made it clear that this was not his intention.

His actual relationship (and that expected of his followers) to his society is best illustrated by the following incident. In response to two of his disciples arguing about requesting positions of authority in his "glory" (probably imagining themselves in Jesus' cabinet after the overthrow of the Romans) Jesus made a pivotal statement: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). In fact, Jesus explicitly describes the worldly paradigm of leadership, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them" (Mark 10:42).

He goes to say, "Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mark 10: 43, 44). Jesus therefore prescribes a policy for his followers that is the reverse of that observed in society. His followers are to exercise their leadership roles as servants, not as authoritarian or domineering

rulers. They are to be givers, not takers; servers, not served. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes other ethical prescriptions for his followers that are equally opposed to those in the society in which he lived. Without going into details, Jesus commands that we love our enemies, that we pray for those that persecute us, that we be generous but in secret so as not to be motivated by the praise of others, that we do not resist an evil person, and that we don't worry about material security or put our trust in money or possessions.

Upon first reading, all these prescriptions sound very desirable. How marvellous if everyone followed Jesus' commands. However, neither Jesus' society nor ours' functions that way. By living out these ethics and serving society in this way Jesus caused sufficient offense to be crucified. While it is true that the religious Jews objected to Jesus' claims of deity, the Romans and the ruling Jewish council were more interested in politics and power. Jesus was seen as subversive. His service to society included condemnation of injustice and hypocrisy. This, along with his actions in siding with the poor and rejecting worldly power and materialism, made him a state enemy.

He didn't threaten armed rebellion; he didn't even encourage civil disobedience. Jesus' actions in cleansing the temple and breaking pharisaical Sabbath laws certainly challenged the prevailing religious authority but from the Romans' point of view they were not illegal actions. In fact, Jesus encouraged his followers to obey civil authority. That is not to say civil disobedience is never an option for a Christian because our primary allegiance must always be to God, but simply to make the point that it was not the reason for Jesus' crucifixion. He simply lived according to different set of ethics; he lived to serve, not to be served. These ethics of grace, love, submission, non-materialism and service were sufficiently subversive that he was executed.

How does this impact us today? Well, Jesus was very clear, "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). That is, if we follow Jesus and seek to serve our society in the same way, our lives will also be subversive and we too will incur the wrath of the incumbent powers. This is not to say that the state is always evil. Rather, it is generally the case that people living according to ethics of grace and service will clash with existing power structures and social orders since grace takes no notice of status, power or merit. In order for some to remain in positions of power and privilege, others must remain in positions of subservience and under-privilege. When we seek to redress this under-privilege and pursue justice for the marginalized and powerless in the name of Jesus, we are understandably opposed by those who may lose out. In fact, striving for justice is no more popular with incumbent powers now than in Jesus' time. Brazilian bishop Helder Camara noted: "When I give food to the poor, they call me

Peace is the Way to Peace*

Is peace the place my soul sits still and waits for God to heal my ill?
Is peace a lack of strife and fear where parents and children each other truly hear?
Is peace a time when nations no longer fight the needs and aspirations of the other in sight?
Is peace inside or out?

Peace possible yet a dream far to vast it becomes so illusive an impossible task
Maybe peace is a process our job becomes clear by removing the obstacles `round impediment steer
The droplets of dignity become justice's creek flowing into a river of peace mighty waters we seek
Peace is the way to peace

*Thanks to A. J. Muste for this simple but profound insight

-Jon Rudy,

MCC Asia Peace Resource, Davao City, Philippines

So captivated by the consumerist imagination of the empire, and so immersed in the empire's self-justifying mythology and rhetoric, we find ourselves unable to fathom the depths of the crisis in which we now live. (Colossians Remixed, 36)

a saint. And when I ask why they have no food, they call me a communist.”

Furthermore, enlisting the support of the government to favour Christianity may be counter-productive. Persecution now, as in the time of Jesus, often comes from the state when it combines with religious authority. Throughout history the combination of state power and religious authority has produced tyranny. From the days of King Solomon, state rulers have used religion as a means to control their subjects. Medieval Christendom, with its crusades, inquisitions and heretic burning also illustrates how state power allied with religious zeal creates tyranny. Islamic fundamentalist countries are following this same pattern. In fact, it may be possible to identify emerging elements of it in the current US government.

We see this in the Bible in Revelation 13. Here we have two beasts, ruling the earth and persecuting Christians. The first beast represents the state power. Although it also has a religious dimension and it becomes an object of worship. The second beast is allied with the first; it is a miracle worker who forces the people to worship the first beast. For the first readers of this vision, it is easy to see how these beasts represented the Roman state with its imperial cult. This combination of state power and religious authority created the tyranny of Domitian, Nero and others.

So what should be our response? Firstly, we must acknowledge that persecution comes because our very lifestyle of following in the footsteps of Jesus is subversive and causes us to generally be at odds with the ruling powers in our society. As Jesus did, we must serve our society and love our neighbours (and enemies). This will include being committed to speaking and acting against injustice and hypocrisy. It will include energetically advocating for the rights of all people, whether we agree with them or not, to exist peacefully and justly within our society. Just as Jesus sought justice for and showed love to the oppressed and marginalized, we are obliged to do the same for any who suffer hostility and injustice because of their gender, race, disability, class, religion or sexual preference. . The fact that Australian Christians have been mostly free of persecution for 200 years may be as much a testimony to a lack of demonstration of Jesus' ethics as it is a result of a benign or favourable government.

Secondly, we must avoid seeking to form a coalition with the state power in order to form a “Christian society”. As with the examples above, such coalitions are recipes for tyranny. The church must never seek such dominion or authority but remain a servant. This service of course includes speaking out and acting against injustice and ungodliness but it will not involve any “lording over” as Jesus describes in Mark 10:42. Kenneth Kaunda, former president of Zambia, put it this way: “What a nation needs more than anything else is not a Christian ruler in the palace but a Christian prophet within earshot.”

Thirdly, the response to persecution must be that of Jesus. In Revelation, the believers are exhorted to be patient in the face of persecution. In chapter 12, John states that “They overcame him by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their own lives so much as to shrink from death” (Rev. 12:11). These Christians did not adopt the methods of their

opponents and seek power, authority or dominion. They started no pre-emptive war against their human oppressors. Rather, as Jesus did before them, they remained submissive, they were servants, they turned the other cheek, they loved their enemies, they refused to be enticed by the material riches on offer. This is not to suggest that we passively accept all persecution. There were times when Jesus did not (see Luke 4:28-30 for example). However, Jesus never used the methods of his enemies (violence for example). He always demonstrated ethics of service, grace and love.

To stand up for the human rights of our traditional enemies may well be the most powerful statement we can make of the gospel in modern Australia.

We also note that these first century Christians of Asia-Minor “overcame” by the word of their testimony. That is, they maintained their witness to Jesus and his message. This message is not only about God's forgiveness of our sins but also about God's desire for justice and healing in the world. In the face of great persecution, these Christians did not compromise their witness to all that Jesus represented. For us this means not retreating into isolationism but embracing every opportunity to pursue justice and mercy for all.

As with Jesus, this response cost some of the Christians in the churches of Asia-Minor their lives. It costs many Christians today their lives. It may well cost us our lives. A tough ask? Jesus demands nothing less: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). We don't need reminding that a cross was an instrument of execution. This is not to encourage fear. It is simply the decision we made when we chose to follow Jesus. The early church faced great dangers, far beyond what we can imagine in Australia, however, they prayed not for protection but for boldness.

So what about the prospect of radical Islam “taking over” Australia? Should we fear? How should we defend our “Christian society”? It is clear that compromising Jesus' ethics of selflessly offering compassion and seeking justice for the poor and disadvantaged is not an option. We cannot close up shop or ignore suffering around the world in order to protect our own comfort. We must avoid any solutions that increase fear and paranoia or demonisation of those of other races or religions.

We must obey God and continue to preach His gospel of good news to the poor and release of the oppressed in spite of the consequences. To be fearful or hateful or mocking of individuals of another religion is not the way of Jesus. We must continue to love our neighbours, feed, clothe and house those in need and show grace to sinners (which includes us all).

- John McKinnon, NSW State Coordinator, Tear Australia

www.tear.org.au

Multiple sexual partners is just good capitalism. Let's be clear about this. The neoconservative economic policies that took hold of Western societies at the end of the twentieth century, together with their free-trade global agenda, function as the ideological ground and legitimation of a cultural ethos of sexual promiscuity – regardless of how personally pious the perpetrators of this kind of economics might be. (Colossians Remixed, 162)

BOOKS AND RESOURCES

Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire

BY BRIAN J WALSH & SYLVIA C KEESMAT
INTERVARSITY PRESS 2004

Brian Walsh has already established something of a reputation with his thoughtful exploration of the engagement between the Christian faith and contemporary culture. His most recent book on postmodernity, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, was co-authored with Old Testament scholar Richard Middleton.

In *Colossians Remixed* Brian Walsh has teamed up his wife Sylvia Keesmat, a New Testament scholar, to provide a challenging and imaginative re-reading of Paul's epistle to the Colossians in the light of contemporary culture and politics. Globalisation, postmodernity and living in an age of empire are the key themes that are brought into dialogue with the poetry and practice of an epistle written to first century Christians living in the shadow of the Roman empire.

In the Preface Keesmat and Walsh set out their intentions plainly:

The epistle to the Colossians, we are arguing, was an explosive and subversive tract in the context of the Roman empire, and it can and ought to function in an analogous way in the imperial realities of our time. This letter proclaimed an alternative vision of reality, animating a way of life that was subversive to the ethos of the Roman empire. We believe that Paul's letter to the Colossians will only be read with integrity in our time when the radical vision of Christian faith encountered in this text engenders a similarly alternative way of life in our midst. (p, 7)

This is not by any means a standard commentary on Colossians. Indeed, the authors describe it as an "anti-commentary" and have omitted the technical apparatus characteristic of commentaries. While the authors acknowledge the validity of such work they have not included such material because it does not relate to the questions that they bring to the text. The authors of such commentaries are engaged with the issues raised by modernity while Walsh and Keesmat are interested in the questions raised by postmodern culture. The questions are different from those that seem to drive most commentaries and this makes all the difference to both the content and the style.

The questions that drive this anti-commentary are governed by the authors' interests in evangelism and discipleship in contemporary culture. They are interested in reading and listening to Colossians in the cultural context of postmodernity. The questions that shape the book are cultural and political, social and ecological because these

are the questions being asked by the authors, their friends and students.

This book is not only distinctive in its focus but also in its style and the literary means by which it seeks to communicate and persuade. The issue of style is also related to the target audience they wish to communicate with. Fellow scholars in the academic guild of New Testament are clearly not in view.

A variety of literary forms are employed. There is an ongoing dialogue, in which they engage with questions from critical and occasionally sympathetic outsiders. Then there is narrative. The authors recount episodes in the 'story' of a socially powerful and significant woman converted to Christianity in Colossae. This story reminds me very much of Robert Banks account of *Going to Church in the First Century*.

Probably the most innovative and controversial element of Walsh and Keesmat's different styles of communication is the interpretive translations, or targums, of the epistle that re-place and re-interpret the epistle in the context of Christians in the global economy of the early twenty first century.

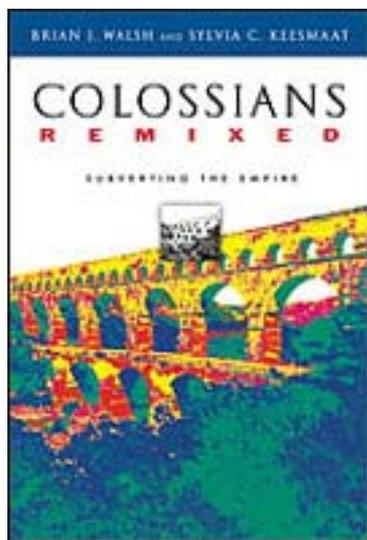
The authors describe a targum as "... an extended translation and expansion that attempts to read the world through the eyes of the text, allowing Scripture to resonate with and confront our changing cultural reality." (p.85) What we are offered in these targums is more than a paraphrase because it engages in an attempt to read the culture with an imagination that is being reshaped by the images of Scripture, images that emerge from the stories of God's activity in the life of Israel and Jesus as Messiah.

In this use of targums Keesmat and Walsh thus refuse to confine their reading of Scripture within the narrow confines of the public or the disembodied realm of the religious. Their interpretation of Colossians presents the Christian community as having its own politics that refuses to grant ultimacy

to the claims of empire now as well as then.

While the authors' re-imagining of Colossians and their vindication of the epistle against its postmodern critics is challenging intellectually, it is also demanding in its call to the Christian church to recover its identity against the claims of consumerism, marketing and empire. The authors observe in their preface:

St Paul knows that the vision that he is talking about makes no sense if it doesn't shape the Christian household as an alternative to the dominant Roman model of household life. And so the testing ground for anything we say in this book is first and foremost our family. Our Three children, Jubal, Madeleine and Lydia did not have to "suffer through" the writing of this book. ... rather we thank them for grounding our lives in the important things like learning and housekeeping, playing and growing up, stories and nighttime prayers, tears and laughter. (p.9)



The church is important for them too. *Colossians is a subversive tract for subversive living, and it insists that such an alternative imagination and alternative way of life is formed and sustained in the context of community.... We have been sustained with bread and wine, prayers and fellowship, baptisms and funerals, joy and sorrow through our worship at the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto. This wonderful parish has been a place for us to serve as teachers and preachers in ministry to the homeless and in pastoral care for the hurting and dying. And it has been a nourishing community that has sustained and encouraged our growth in Christian discipleship. (p.9)*

What we have here is a reading of Colossians for our time that draws together the Reformed conviction that faith embraces all of our life with an Anabaptist insistence that the church should embody an alternative politics to that offered by the empire of the day.

This is a challenging and helpful book. The bringing together of cultural critique with a fresh reading

of Scripture that is not confined within the framework of modernity and its limiting of the Christian faith to what can be vindicated within the confines of rationalism is all too rare.

The diversity of rhetorical forms used is also helpful in breaking open a tendency in the Christian church to hang on to a controlling monologue style in its teaching. The process of discernment as to how we should live as disciples is opened up through this diversity to a multi-voiced dialogue that cannot be finally closed down with a definitive answer. All our responses of discipleship and communal action are provisional and subject to change in the light of the experience, cultural change and the ongoing communal re-reading of Scripture. The re-reading of our culture and politics in the cause of living out and bringing God's shalom into our neighbourhoods, families and communities is an ongoing task.

For this rich contribution to subverting the empire and the mirroring of the empire in the church and for their hope for a community that will give form to God's shalom project in a time of seemingly irresistible all-encompassing empire, I give thanks.

- Reviewed by Doug Hynd

Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front

BY WENDELL BERRY

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a
card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.
So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.
Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millenium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested

when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.
Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.
Listen to carrion - put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?
Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

"Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998), pp. 87-88. (Quoted in *Colossians Remixed*, 178)

Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World,

LEE CAMP, BRAZOS PRESS, 2003.

Lee Camp is assistant professor of Christian ethics at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee.

“Like C. S. Lewis and Dietrich Bonhoeffer before him, Lee Camp is driven by a passionate commitment to the kind of Christianity that offers no shortcuts and promises, no cheap grace, but is radically demanding, fundamentally life-changing, and entirely worth living. Here is a book that was just bursting to be written. Here is Christianity built foursquare upon a developing relationship with Jesus the Christ. . . . The style is highly accessible and the treatment quite reader friendly. This book is not at all difficult to read, yet it is informative, challenging, and provocative enough for all who are looking for a clearer profile of discipleship or a sharper focus to their Christian life. . . . It is not only the shadow of [John Howard Yoder] or the tracks of the tradition—nor even the pen of Lee C. Camp—that shows through on every page; the author’s moral authority is equally evident, and this, his first book, cries out for a second.” —Anthony J. Gittins, *Missiology*

“Be sure you are ready for solid food before beginning Lee Camp’s *Mere Discipleship*. You will find here nothing of America’s pop religion. Nothing of what some are calling electronic soul molesters, hurling to hearth and household a gospel to ‘take up your cross and relax,’ or ‘take up your cross and get rich.’ I found myself frightened at times, yet exulting in the knowledge that I was exposing myself to tough truth about the faith I claim. An uncommon experience not to be rushed.” —Will D. Campbell, author of *Brother to a Dragonfly*

Overcoming ‘Unease Isolation’ with Mere Discipleship

BY JARROD MCKENNA

In the contexts I find myself ministering, be it ministry training colleges, speaking in a diversity of church settings, conferences, or in high schools, it’s clear to me that ‘something is happening’. I was recently interviewed by a number of radio stations to do with some of the peace

activism I’m involved with and one announcer asked about the details of one particular campaign. I found myself unable to answer without reference to this ‘something that is happening’. And not just here in Australia but many are discerning that this is, what author and leader of the alternative voice in American evangelicalism Jim Wallis has called a, “karios moment” in our history, that the Spirit is stirring something in God’s people.

There is a longing, a quiet yet desperate intuition that people can’t shake. It’s a deep, almost lamenting sense that there must be more to life in Christ than we have been finding in our conventional church settings. Many in house-church/alternative churches and communities are gathering together because of this unshakable sense.

Yet finding resources which draw from deep traditions that are not simply faddish reactions to the mainstream can be difficult.

The Christian book market is constantly flooded with material that leaves people neither shaken nor stirred; books that do little more than dress up our confined consumerist lifestyles of comfort and conformity in Christian clothing (even cool Christian clothing) in the interest of being “relevant”. I encounter countless people who share what I’ve come to diagnose as Unease Isolation. Unease Isolation symptoms (or Angst Isolation in its more severe cases) often include feeling like you are the only one in a sea of worshipping people who feels something isn’t right. They feel like the Christ they encountered in their initial conversion called and empowered them for something more than ‘doing church’ whether it is doing mega-church or doing alternative-café-church. They feel Christ called and empowered them to BE church.

In the flood of mass-marketed easy answers, there is a book that doesn’t talk about missions in terms of the church making Jesus “relevant”. It doesn’t suggest the church needs new slick marketing strategies or the problem lies solely in the need for the transition from modernity to postmodernity. Rather Lee Camp’s *Mere Discipleship* suggests the church needs not to be relevant to the world but authentic to the message of Christ. What is needed is for the church to BE the church.

If I could contribute to the making of a cliché, Lee Camp’s new book, *Mere Discipleship* is a red pill on offer to us in this flood of blue pills which stock the shelves of so many Christian book stores. *Mere Discipleship* trusts God enough to ask hard questions. Lee Camp makes theologian John H. Yoder and the Anabaptist witness to the Christianity lived by the early Christians accessible to those who’s theological reading never ventures passed Phillip Yancey and who think “Anna Baptist” is a woman’s name.

Part of the Unease Isolation that is felt by so many is that the communities we worship with often are not alternatives to the ways of the world but in fact share the same dynamics of rampant consumerism and a trust that lording power over others gets things done. Unease Isolation can intensify for those who have an awareness of history and know that for many Christian History is remembered for power games rather than the

When humans refuse to use God’s gift of sexuality responsibly, they are handing over their power to Aphrodite, and she will take control. When humans refuse to use God’s gift of money responsibly, they are handing over their power to Mammon, and he will take control. And so on. And when the powers take over, human beings get crushed. (Colossians Remixed, 142)

empowerment of the marginalised; remembered for genocide rather than lifestyles of generosity; remembered for the violence of the State rather than the nonviolence of the crucified Christ. Some say we might rightly feel embarrassed about our faith. Yet upon this ocean of despair floats this little faithful vessel, **Mere Discipleship**, that reminds us that, although we may be horrified by a history of Christianity that looks nothing like Christ, we need not be ashamed of the gospel. Amidst the waters of unthinking fundamentalism and un-enthraling liberalism, **Mere Discipleship** is a lucid, intelligent yet simple read which has shaken, inspired and moved me to embody the teachings and life of Christ in my ecclesia and in my community—and to do so in Resurrection power. But be warned, it is not to be read unless you are ready to hear the call, “follow me”.

- Jarrod lives in an intentional community in one of Perth’s (Western Australia) dodgiest neighbourhoods with a beautiful crew of people, chickens and ducks who daily remind him he’s a bastard in need of the transforming power of grace yet, he is deeply loved. For a crust Jarrod is the director of Epyc (Empowering Peacemakers in Your Community) which works at training the next generation of eco-prophets in the transformational nonviolence of Christ. Jarrod can be found, sometimes singing in key, with the Perth Anabaptist Fellowship when he’s not speaking elsewhere.

We can probably tell as much about the real spirituality and the real worldview of a people by looking at the cars they drive, the food they consume, the gadgets that fill their homes and the garbage they throw out as we can listening to the songs they sing and the prayers they pray. (Colossians Remixed, 199)

Spirituality as Discipleship

C. Arnold Snyder *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition* (Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series) Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 2004

Issues in Defining Christian Spirituality

The Traditions of Christian Spirituality series now stretches out, with an apparent drive to ecumenical completeness to a total of eighteen volumes. To include in the series an account of the Anabaptist tradition of spirituality may at first glance seem to be excessively stretching the boundaries of Christian spirituality. Can we bring Menno Simons, Conrad Grebel and Pilgram Marpeck, to quote the names of a few leading figures from the early Anabaptist movement, into this twentieth century conversation?

The answer is that bringing about that engagement turns out to be not all that difficult after all. Indeed, the account of “spirituality” in the Preface to the Series by the Editor Philip Sheldrake might have been written especially with this volume on Anabaptist spirituality in mind. After lamenting that contemporary searches for spirituality have largely ignored the Christian traditions in general, Sheldrake argues that:

From a Christian perspective spirituality is not just concerned with prayer or even with narrowly religious activities. It concerns the whole of human life, viewed in a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and within a community of believers. (p.12)

In not only linking faith and life but in providing a communal location and context for Christian spirituality, Sheldrake has distanced his project from many contemporary expressions of spirituality. He has also provided a framework into which an account of Anabaptist spirituality fits very neatly indeed.

My case on the close connection between spirituality and life in the Anabaptist tradition is clearly illustrated by the location and treatment of the section on spirituality in the **Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective** (1995). Article 18 of the Confession is devoted to ‘Christian Spirituality’ and is the second article in the section that deals with the theme of discipleship.

The author of this volume C. Arnold Snyder is Professor of History at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo, Canada and has researched and written extensively on the history and theology of the early Anabaptists. He has a deep and detailed knowledge of the medieval spiritual and theological roots of the early Anabaptists.

Snyder is deeply faithful in this volume to the emphasis in his tradition on spirituality as being integrally linked with discipleship and presents the substance of Anabaptist spirituality as one that de-constructs any attempt to settle for a do-it-yourself, spirituality ‘lite’.

The account of Anabaptist spirituality in this volume draws heavily on testimonies and confessions of tradespeople and peasants in response to questioning while under arrest or awaiting execution. Snyder introduces us to a sample of these as we work our way through the major issues and practices of the movement. We have here then a lay spirituality that while it engaged on occasions with academic discourse, was not confined in its practice to the educated groups within society.

This is a well-written volume that is accessible to the non-academic reader, though demanding in terms of its challenge to our lives and churches. In organising the book, the author has been aware that many of the potential readers would have little knowledge of the historical roots of the Anabaptist tradition. Chapter One, therefore, opens with a brief historical sketch of the emergence of the movement in its respective Swiss Brethren, South German/Austrian and North German/Dutch forms.

Having set out the historical context of the movement, Snyder then provides an account as to why the Anabaptist tradition needs to be approached as being neither Catholic, nor Protestant, or perhaps as both Catholic and Protestant. Ascetic Catholic piety and reforming Protestant emphases were retained and uniquely shaped in the crucible of the early decades of the movement. Snyder is confident in asserting that by about 1560 the scattered Anabaptist groups that had survived the assault of the established church and state power were clear that their way forward lay with neither Wittenberg, Geneva nor Rome. The form of Anabaptist distinctiveness set out in the first chapter is critical to understanding the account of spirituality that follows.

In the opening to Chapter One, Snyder sets out his basic thesis in terms of a spirituality that embraces both the inner and outer dimension of our life. *The visible features of the Anabaptist understanding of the faithful Christian life – the baptism of adults and living in faithful and active discipleship are certainly best known and most easily recognised. However, they are only part of the story. What is less well known and what will occupy us particularly in this volume, is the spiritual understanding and practice that undergirded, nourished and defined the visible Anabaptist witness. (p.16)*

What lies behind the Anabaptist spirituality is a form and practice of church. Indeed, it would be safe to say that the church

As Luke tells the story, almost everything Jesus did or said was an implicit challenge to the empire and its way of working in the world. (Colossians Remixed, 70)

is the nearest thing to the traditional understanding of a sacrament in the Anabaptist tradition. While the practice of churching is not dealt with until Chapter Five, it provides the skeleton for all the preceding chapters.

Each of the subsequent chapters is substantial and tempted this reviewer down the path of detailed quotation and discussion. Much of the spirituality described picks up themes that cut across the grain of contemporary culture. While on first glance they may seem attractive to those of conservative evangelical disposition, on closer inspection they are likely to prove somewhat more radical and unsettling in their implications. The account of the foundational theme of the fear of the Lord, for example, carries with it the corollary that there is no reason to fear any created being, leading to a fearlessness and an unwillingness to defer to those who exercise political power.

Discipleship, a key theme in the Anabaptist tradition has its roots here in the theme of yieldedness to God. Following Christ with its outward implications in peacemaking, economics and mutual service has its roots in a dying to self and the world and an embracing of the cross even if it costs all that one holds dear in life. This 'yieldedness' or 'gelassenheit' commences deep within the human heart. The outer and the inner dimensions are inextricably linked.

Each of the remaining chapters reflects this dynamic of the linkage of the inner and the outer in the lives of the disciples. While the difference in the theology and practice of baptism between the churches of "Christendom" and the Anabaptists is well known, this account throws fresh light on the spirituality of baptism and its ascetic and communal significance including an interesting parallel with the process of profession in monastic orders.

When being a Christian is being reduced to an internal disembodied matter, of "a personal relationship to Jesus", and when participation in a church community is shaped by a consumerist practice of "church shopping", Chapter Five "The Body of Christ" dealing with the church, is clearly counter-cultural in its implications.

Snyder is insistent that spiritual power and outward witness are inextricably tied together in the practice and theology of church. There is a deeply communal and embodied character to the understanding of the church developed by the Anabaptists that denied the contemporary spiritualist emphasis on the inner experience and insisted on the significance of the outward ordinances of baptism, fraternal admonition, the supper of remembrance and the practice of foot-washing. In their theology and practice of the church, the Anabaptists arrived at their nearest approach to a sacramental understanding. The resulting ecclesiology clearly placed them at odds with the Reformers' emphasis on the invisibility of the church.

The Anabaptists ...were convinced that when the living Spirit of God in believers worked to bring them together by the outward signs and ceremonies of their unity (as ordained by Christ) the result would be the establishment of the very Body of Christ in the world visibly working through his members ... for it was in the church – thus conformed, united and marked – where one would find the "real presence" of Christ in the world. The real presence of Christ depended not on proper priestly administration, nor on human power of any kind, but rather on the living power of God, who alone could accomplish the work

through the faith, trust, Gelassenheit, and obedience of believers. (pp.109-110)

The other distinctive theme of Anabaptist spirituality that should be noted is that relating to martyrdom, or 'the baptism in blood'. In the Anabaptist understanding, baptism in the Spirit led to baptism in water. Water baptism, however, pointed beyond itself in the commitment to following Jesus in bodily suffering, if necessary to death. Faith then was less about believing than about trusting, evidenced in yielded obedience and in life, wherever it might lead, through acceptance of the discipline of the community and the testing of persecution.

At the end of this account of Anabaptist spirituality focussed on the first fifty years of the movement's emergence, Snyder provides a closing chapter in which he briefly sketches out the significance of this tradition for our time. I have to acknowledge that I found this chapter challenging in two ways. The first challenge comes in its call to 'yieldedness' and the linking of this to a spirituality of non-violence.

... the Anabaptist call to radical discipleship insists that disciples are those who allow the spiritual power of the risen Christ to manifest itself in their lives. The disciples of Jesus will live lives that remind the world of Jesus, not because they are super-human rule-keepers, but because they have yielded to the power of the risen Christ in their lives. It is this spirit of 'Gelassenheit', of 'yieldedness', that corresponds to a non-violent life, a life that refuses to insist on the forceful imposition of one's will on the world. (p. 186)

I need to be cautious about judgements here, given that I am writing this review from a position of relative privilege and have not had contact with the experience of struggle, persecution and the likelihood of painful death that powerfully shaped Anabaptist spirituality.

The second challenge arises out of the need for a communal expression of such a spirituality. Can the churches recover their nerve and sense of identity to take up their calling to form and sustain such a spirituality of community and discipleship in a time in Australia where an individualising spirituality is taken for granted?

The author finishes with a further sobering reminder. *The Anabaptist experience is a sobering and realistic reminder of the costs of discipleship, of the significance of the baptismal pledge and to commitment to follow after the one who said 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me'. (p.188)*

- Reviewed by Doug Hynd

Globalization isn't just an aggressive stage in the history of capitalism. It is a religious movement of previously unheard-of proportions. Progress is its underlying myth, unlimited economic growth its foundational faith, the shopping mall (physical or online) its place of worship, consumerism its overriding image, "I'll have a Big Mac and fries" its ritual of initiation, and global domination its ultimate goal. (Colossians Remixed, 30)

I am more used to seeing bullets on the ground than I am date pits

In some places
I am more used to seeing spent bullets on the ground
than I am date pits.

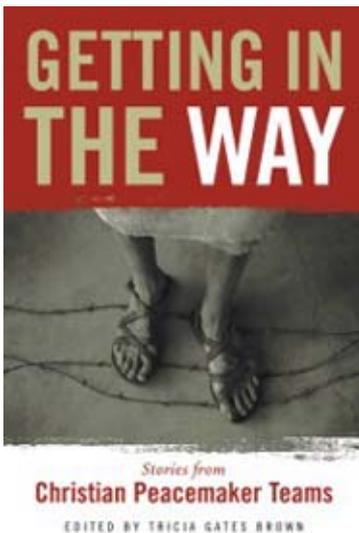
At a glance
the two look similar:
short
thin
covered in dust.
Their tips share a point,
their butt ends lazy.

But the two serve a different purpose;
one takes life
the other gives it.
One is rusting
the other is seeding.

I often wish
I was more used to seeing date pits
forlorn on the ground
than I am spent bullets
but whenever I see either
-at a glance-
I know a life has been served.

- by Greg Rollins, Christian Peacemaker Teams,
in Amman, Jordan waiting to return to Iraq
CPTnet, January 25, 2005

Herald Press Releases



- **Getting in the Way: Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams** edited by Tricia Gates Brown.

"These harrowing accounts of nonviolent interposition read like first-century martyrologies. The courage of these Christian Peacemakers Teams is breathtaking, and will serve to challenge others to similar heroism." -Walter Wink, **Jesus and Nonviolence**

The stories recounted in this collection of first-person narratives were written by members of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). The fear, joy and challenge faced by

these committed Christians is reported vividly from trouble spots like Haiti, Iraq and Colombia, where the CPT work to reduce violence and conflict. Whether relating an account of incarceration in an Israeli prison, the death of a CPT member in Iraq, or coming face-to-face with angry loggers in the forests of Canada, the narratives in **Getting in the Way** are intimate, moving, and deeply humanizing.

"Recounts thrilling stories about one of the most exciting and important recent developments in nonviolent peacemaking.

Even tiny numbers of Christian Peacemaker Teams have demonstrated dramatic effectiveness. Think of the impact if the Christian church would train and deploy thousands of courageous peacemakers using the effective strategies of the brave pioneers described in **Getting in the Way.**" -Ron Sider, President, Evangelicals for Social Action

"The work of Christian Peacemaker Teams is at the cutting edge of contemporary Christian witness. These stories - vivid, personal, passionate, authentic - are nothing short of a contemporary gospel, incarnating Jesus's radical way of peace in a world wracked by violence." -**The Other Side**

Tricia Gates Brown is an independent scholar, writer, and poet. She holds a PhD in New Testament Studies from the University of St. Andrews (Scotland).

- **Unsettled Weather: How do I forgive? A group study on forgiveness using a storytelling method** by Wilma L. Derksen

When Wilma and Cliff Derksens' daughter was killed in 1984, they chose the word "forgiveness," hoping it would somehow spare them the horrors of the aftermath of violence and the ensnaring justice issues. But Wilma confesses: "I soon came to resent anyone who said: 'Just forgive' as if it were that easy."

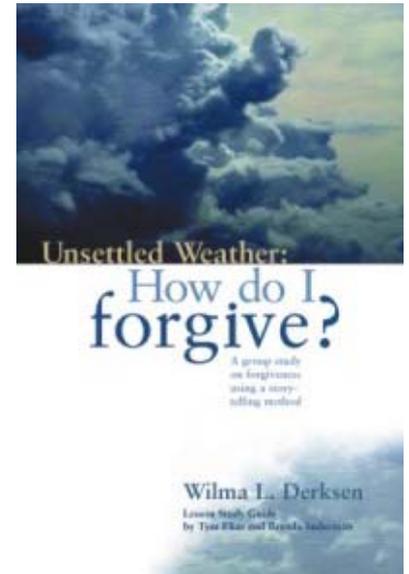
Later she joined a support group of other parents of murdered children where it became obvious that forgiveness was considered an "F" word. Since, she has teamed with Sunday school teachers, pastors, and counsellors in the Winnipeg, Manitoba, area to explore how storytelling can become a method and the message of moving toward forgiveness of others.

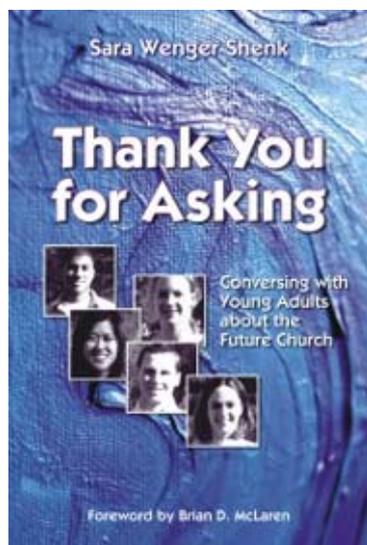
In this study guide Wilma Derksen, Tym Elias, and Brenda Suderman share a seven-session tested approach on storytelling. This is a vital resource for persons in classes, study groups, and congregations who wish to take steps toward forgiveness.

Wilma L. Derksen of Winnipeg, Manitoba, serves as director of Victims' Voice for Mennonite Central Committee Canada. She is a frequent speaker and workshop leader in religious and public forums. Her publications include **Confronting the Horror: the Aftermath of Violence** (Amity Publishers, 2002) and **Have You Seen Candace?** (Tyndale, 1991). Both books deal with the grief and the long walk toward forgiveness she and her husband Cliff experienced after their 13-year-old daughter was abducted and murdered. In 1997, she graduated from the University of Winnipeg focusing on interpersonal conflict resolution studies. From 1985 to 1995 she served as Western Regional Editor for **Mennonite Reporter**.

- **Thank You for Asking: Conversing with Young Adults about the Future Church** by Sara Wenger Shenk

"Presbyterians, Catholics, Pentecostals, Episcopalians, and others will feel that these Mennonite stories, with a few small adjustments, could be their own. We're more alike than we





usually realize.” -From the Foreword by Brian D. McLaren

This is a book of stories—the stories of young adults as told to other young adults who are working hard with imagination, longing, and love to weave a coherent faith and way of life. The stories provide exemplary illustrations of how young adults are drawing vibrant threads from the wonderful, but somewhat frayed heritage they’ve been given and weaving them into a new coherency. They show the way toward a future church that will be authentic,

down-to-earth and life giving for their generation.

The young adults in this book invite pastors, parents and friends into a potentially transformative dialogue about the stories and practices we use to make sense of our world and to form a way of life. The work young adults do is challenging work, often lonely work; but when done in the company of loved and respected others, it is the heart and soul of what makes life good. As we enter into genuine conversation with the questions and visions of young adults, our faith communities will be transformed.

“I walked away from my group interview really pumped up. The interaction between the participants had been exceptionally honest and genuine. What struck me most was not just their willingness to discuss these questions, but their eagerness to do so. One of the group commented about how fun the conversation was, admitting how rarely she gets to talk about these questions with a group her age.”

-Chet Denlinger, from the research team

Sara Wenger Shenk is associate dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia. For this book, she was assisted by a team of young adults who engaged 56 of their peers in interviews.

Passing on the Comfort: The War, the Quilts, and the Women Who Made a Difference

BY AN KEUNING-TICHELAAR AND LYNN KAPLANIAN-BULLER, GOOD BOOKS, 2005

Two women find each other in Holland, brought together improbably by a set of worn quilts, made by groups of women half-a-world-away who simply used what they had. First there is An in Holland in the early 1940s, fighting to keep the War from taking over her young, promising life. Despite being from a well-to-do family, she risks her life repeatedly to care for war-time refugees—hiding a Jewish baby in her hand-luggage while on a ferry that draws gunfire; distracting the guard at a bridge so a fugitive without a pass can be bicycled across; stuffing documents under a body lying in state in a room in her home when soldiers suddenly launch a raid; and much more.

At the same time, groups of women across North America meet in sewing circles, concerned that the War is destroying homes and families throughout Europe. They know they can't stop the devastation. But they can make quilts—and then bundle

them up and send them off to do their part to give comfort and courage during the War.

Lynn comes 20-some years later, showing up in Amsterdam fresh from America in the mid-1960s, a little rebellious and tired of another war. She didn't know An then, and quilts were not something she ever made. But her grandmother and aunts and other older women in her childhood church did.

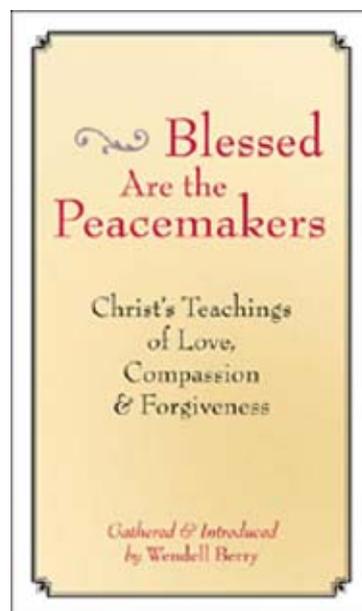
One weekend, Lynn discovers the quilts that survived the War and goes searching for their owner and their stories. She found An and, ultimately, herself.

The book brings together these true, yet nearly unbelievable stories; it pictures the 19 work-worn quilts, along with many historic photographs of the places where the War reached An, as well as current photos of An and Lynn together today.

This is a treasure that will inspire women everywhere not to turn aside from helping others—in little ways, in ordinary ways.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Christ's Teachings of Love, Compassion, and Forgiveness

GATHERED AND INTRODUCED BY WENDELL BERRY, SHOEMAKER & HOARD, 2005.



For two thousand years, artists, social and cultural activists, politicians and philosophers, humanists and devoted spiritual seekers have all looked to the sayings of Jesus for inspiration and instruction. Unfortunately, on occasions too frequent and destructive to enumerate, the teachings of Christ have been either ignored or distorted by the very people calling themselves Christian. Today, we see a vigorous movement in America fuelled by a politicized and engaged portion of the electorate involved in just such ignorance and distortion. Whether directed towards social intolerance or attitudes of warlike aggression, these right-wing citizens have claimed a power of influence that far exceeds their numbers.

This small book collects the sayings of Jesus, selected by Mr. Berry, who has contributed an essay of introduction. Here is a way of peace as described and directed by one of the greatest spiritual teachers in the West. This is a book of inspiration and prayerful compassion, and we may hope a ringing call to action at a time when the United States and the world it once led stand at a dangerous crossroads.

...we have the audacity to say to the darkness, "We beg to differ!" (Colossians Remixed, 41)

Safe Passages On City Streets

DOROTHY T. SAMUEL, ABINGDON PRESS, 1975.

“THE FEAR OF CRIME is destroying some of the basic human freedoms which any open society is supposed to safeguard – freedom to walk the streets and to be secure in our homes, freedom of movement, freedom from fear itself.”

Substitute the word “terrorism” or “refugees” for “crime” in the quote above and you have a very contemporary description of American and Australian society.

Dorothy Samuel’s little book is a bit of a classic in nonviolence circles. She writes about being safe in major American urban areas but her suggestions are relevant for anyone living in a society being pressured by fear.

In her Introduction, Samuel says, “The largest prison in America has no bars, no locks, and no guards. The inmates are absolutely free to go anywhere they want at any time they choose...They are all serving self-imposed sentences...that only they can terminate.”(9) What keeps people imprisoned is fear.

We can never be free from all danger and no technique or tactic “can guarantee that one shall walk unscathed from cradle to grave...But we can get out of jail...the bars of fear in the mind unscrewed...We can use creative imagination to program ourselves for freedom, for constructive interpersonal relations, for daringly human responses one to another, for biological and spiritual kinship.” (11)

The bulk of the book tells stories of people who have chosen to respond out of love and compassion instead of fear and suspicion to situations of potential harm. These people learned to “armour” themselves *inside* with values they carry with them. Some of the principles Samuel covers are:

“Love is a self-feeding explosion, just as fear is.” (15)

“Fearfulness, nervousness, despondency, anger... predispose some people to victim status.” (26)

One cannot plan exactly what one will do in a dangerous situation. “But one can plan and program her or his consciousness; one can choose the mental and emotional world in which he will live. When emergencies erupt, one answers out of that mental and emotional world.” (34)

“When older people have fed their minds on thoughts that uplift, and trained their emotions on feelings that ennoble, they become invincible.” (36)

“Maturity is the ennobling of youth’s idealistic impulses through experience and thought and discipline, so that the hedonistic centre of being is transformed into reasoned wisdom. Maturity should make us more understanding of human weaknesses...more skilful in reaching the good in others...more powerful in transforming evil...Maturity should turn brashness into quiet courage, and self-centeredness into personal integrity.” (37)

“Fearlessness acts, it does not simply react according to conventional stereotypes. Fearlessness is always individual, unique, and unpredictable. Fearlessness confronts any situation with authentic personhood.” (40)

“We attract that which we fear.” (41)

“We become what we feed upon.” (46)

“The very presence of a gun or other weapon indicates the sort of people we have become...It takes courage to root our personal safety in the strength of our own character and life-style alone.” (57)

“Simple life-styles...proclaim a faith. They advertise a greater value on people-needs than on possessions.” (67)

Neighbourliness and building a sense of community is important in keeping urban areas safe. The change in attitude among neighbours is important. “They begin to lose the corrosive fear which has constricted their personalities and blighted their reactions to other human beings...This attitude of freedom to be

oneself, and of respect for other selves, is...the greatest protective device a person can have.” (87)

Throughout the book, Samuel draws on Quaker principles like looking for the good in the other person and a strong belief in the possibility of transformation – of people and events. She emphasises simple living and living out of one’s beliefs.

“We are what we eat – mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as well as physically. People who feed their inner selves on the literature of violence, the conversation of fear, the planning of retaliation, and the fantasies of quick draw and sudden uppercuts, escalate violence in any encounter.” (90)

“We build our faith by the information with which we saturate our consciousnesses. And we all ‘act out’ that upon which our minds are feeding.” (93)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (4:6-9)

Dwell on the good things. Good advice for individuals, neighbourhoods, and nations.

Practice resurrection!
(Wendell Berry in Colossians Remixed, 178)

AROUND THE WORLD

Mennonite Central Committee closes its programme in the Philippines

BY EARL MARTIN

MANILA, Philippines — Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) closed its programme in the Philippines this August after 33 years. Farewell celebrations in Manila and in Davao City served as a time of celebration and lament, with past and present MCC workers, partners and friends sharing stories, memories and thanks.

“Thanks so much for walking with us,” said Priscilla Ramoso, a former Catholic sister, at a recent farewell celebration in the southern island of Mindanao. “Your hands were empty. But you were holding our hands. You listened. You didn’t say so much. But thank you for making Jesus’ presence present with us.”

The move is part of a larger shift of resources in MCC’s international programs. “Because the Philippines has a vital and experienced sector of nongovernmental organizations, we made the difficult decision to wrap up MCC’s work there,” said Ed Martin, director of MCC’s Central/ Southern Asia programs.

MCC worked in the Philippines from 1946 to 1950 as part of post-World War II rehabilitation in Abra Province in northern Luzon. In 1975 the executive director of MCC identified Mindanao as a major flashpoint for conflict in Southeast Asia. At the time the Philippine government, with considerable U.S. military aid, was fighting a Muslim effort to achieve more political autonomy in that

island that had been their traditional homeland. Filipino Christian and Muslim friends in Mindanao identified for MCC the issue of land as being at the heart of the struggle. Hence, the first MCC workers in 1977, Gene Stoltzfus and Dorothy Friesen, focused their writing and public witness efforts on the impact of large multinational agribusiness companies, such as Dole pineapple plantations, in Mindanao. Later, MCC workers lived in Muslim and indigenous tribal communities in Mindanao to stand with the people and to share their stories through the global church and press outlets.

Filipinos identified another major arena of concern for MCC attention: the presence of Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Field, the two largest U.S. military bases outside of American soil. The bases spawned a dehumanizing economy of sex bars and sleazy entertainment for the thousands of foreign troops sailing in and out of those bases. MCC workers sat with Filipina women in those bars and together organized an empowerment effort to support their entrapped friends. When Filipinos spoke out against those bases, MCC workers supported them with articles and audiovisuals in the North American press and in testimony to

the U.S. Congress. Since the Philippine Congress voted to expel the bases in 1991, the sex bars of Olongapo have largely disappeared, and some Filipinos feel a greater independence.

MCC workers over the years have sought to amplify Filipino voices calling for land rights of minorities, for fair treatment of workers in international mining operations and for enhancing non-violent approaches to promoting change and fairness in Philippine society.

A Muslim partner of MCC in recent years, Guaimel Alim, from Cotabato, Mindanao, said at the recent farewell, "I bring a testimony that Christians and Muslims can not only work and play together, but they can love each other." Recalling how he and his wife were invited into the MCC house in Manila during her medical treatment in the capital, he said, "I learned from that what is taught in the Holy Book: 'to do to the least of these is to do unto me.'"

- Earl Martin served as MCC

Philippines co-representative from 1979 to 1982, as MCC East Asia co-secretary from 1984 to 1992 and in storytelling for MCC Communications from 1993 to 1997.



RE-IMAGINING GOD AND MISSION
within Australian cultures

AUSTRALIAN MISSIOLOGY CONFERENCE
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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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