ON THE ROAD

Journal of the
Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc.
No.27 JUNE 2005

CONTENTS

1 Mennonite Mission Network Visit
2 THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR
2 LETTERS
3 What is an Anabaptist Christian?
7 Evil and Forgiveness
7 Unspeakable: Facing Up to Evil...
11 Listening for the "silences" in the Creeds
13 AROUND THE NETWORK
14 BOOKS AND RESOURCES
14 Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross
15 Growth Fetish
16 Knitting
17 Post-Christendom
19 Simply in Season
20 Waging Nonviolent Struggle
20 UPCOMING EVENTS
20 Limitless sea of love

Mennonite Mission Network Visit 8-12 May 2005

Stanley W Green, James R. Krabill, Sheldon, and Marietta Sawatzky - all administrators with the U.S.-based Mennonite Mission Network - visited Sydney and Canberra during May. "Evangelism and Peacemaking" was the topic for two public meetings.

Stanley Green speaks with Jim Longley (above) James Krabill in conversation with Georgia. (on right) Conversation at the Longley's (below right)

Ross and Diane Coleman speak about Hope Street. (below left)

On The Road

The AAANZ quarterly journal publishes news, articles, book reviews, and resource information. It is published online with a paper edition available for those without computer facilities. (Paper edition A$25 per year) To be added to the mailing list write:

AAANZ@iprimus.com.au or
On The Road Editors, P.O. Box 367
Sutherland NSW 1499 Australia

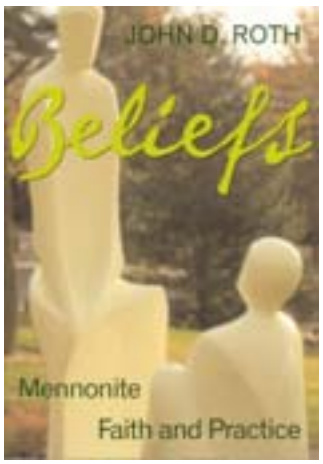
COVER SYMBOL: The lamb in the midst of briars is a traditional Anabaptist symbol. It illustrates the suffering Lamb of God, who calls the faithful to obedient service and discipleship on the road. This particular rendition is from ***Hymnal A Worship Book***. Copyright 1992. Reprinted with permission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

THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

Mark and Mary Hurst

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

"Do you mind me asking what an Anabaptist is?" This came most recently from the QANTAS ticket clerk checking in our bags in Perth but it is a question we get often. We actually enjoy being asked this because it often leads to interesting conversations with the people who ask.



John D. Roth, professor of history at Goshen College in Indiana USA, begins his recent book ***Beliefs: Mennonite Faith and Practice*** (Herald Press, 2005) with a story about a plane flight to California where the Japanese man seated next to him said, "Can you explain to me just what it is that Christians believe?" Roth wrote his book as a way to answer the question from a Mennonite/Anabaptist viewpoint.

During a recent visit to Australia by four staff people from the Mennonite Mission Network, the question came up during an evening session where the topic was "Evangelism and Peacemaking." Some present at the discussion knew nothing about Anabaptists. In answering the question, Sheldon Sawatzky summarized Anabaptism with three statements. **Jesus is the centre of our faith. Community is the centre of our life. Reconciliation is the centre of our work.**

Our lead article in this issue is the talk presented by Palmer Becker where these three points are explained. Hopefully, it will help you when you are asked, "What is an Anabaptist?"

Our work here in Australia and New Zealand is supported by churches in North America. We made a quick trip recently to Pennsylvania while travelling around the world where we met with our support committee called "Friends of Anabaptists Down Under" (FAD). Their work at fundraising and prayer support is what makes it possible for us to be here. They started a website containing letters we send to North America called "Greetings From Oz." If you are interested in keeping up with our comings and goings check out: http://members.localnet.com/~mart2316/Hurst/HurstNews.html.

While we're sharing personal news, we were told recently that we should include a picture of ourselves with our mailings. The person who said this has been receiving the AAANZ Mailings for two years and imagined us being older than what we appeared to be when he finally met us in the flesh. So we include a recent photo to show you what these two grandparents (soon to be "of three") look like.

Enjoy the mix of articles, reviews, news, and poetry. For those in Melbourne and Sydney, take note of the upcoming events with Alan and Eleanor Kreider.

LETTERS

Thanks for issue 26. I really appreciated Chris Marshall's article in response to J. Denny Weaver. I think Chris is correct in his analysis and proposal.

Peace,
Sheldon Sawatzky, Taiwan

Thanks, what a great issue – standouts for me being Chris' essay and Anthony Dancer's small introduction to William Stringfellow. It's great to see Stringfellow in the public arena again…

Paul Fromont, Cambridge New Zealand

Many thanks for sending this on [OTR 26] - it sounds like it was a great event in Canberra and I am most grateful for the nonviolent atonement thinking.

Jonathan Inkpin, Decade to Overcome Violence, Sydney

Thanks for the wonderful edition of On the Road. The quality of presentation was excellent and I particularly enjoyed the inclusion of the children's drawings. They brought colour, light and hope.

The challenge from Nathan was also good to read. I hope there might be some reflection on the issues he raises and responses in the coming issue.

Doug Hynd, Canberra

During an AAANZ event 11 May at the home of Jim and Sally Longley in Sydney, Sheldon Sawatzky from the Mennonite Mission Network shared a summary of Anabaptism that we thought was good. We wanted to share it with a broader audience. What follows is an edited version of a talk given by **Palmer Becker**, Director of Pastoral Ministries at Hesston College, a Mennonite university in Kansas, USA, **http://www.hesston.edu/ACADEMIC/FACULTY/PALMERB/Palmerb.htm**

What is an Anabaptist Christian?

Palmer Becker

Socrates was wise when he said, "Know Thyself." As an Anabaptist people, we are in something of an identity crises. Do we know who we are? Who are the Mennonites? What is an Anabaptist Christian? Let me respond to these hard questions.

The Meaning of a Name

You have probably heard about the student who thought **Anna Baptist** was the wife of John the Baptist! We know that is not true. Some people have thought that an Anabaptist is an **Anti-Baptist**. We also know that is not true! We aren't against the Baptists.

Anabaptist is a nickname for people who have been rebaptized. The name comes from the German, **Ana** (again) + **baptista** (to baptize) = **Anabaptist**. During the time of Martin Luther and the Reformation, someone who had been baptized as an infant and then was baptized again upon confession of faith as an adult was called an Anabaptist. Later, because of the extensive ministry and writings of one of their leaders, Menno Simons, many of these adult believers become known as Mennists or Mennonites.

In our day, **Anabaptist** has come to mean people who have **a different perspective on the Christian faith**. Educator Paul Lederach would say we are **a people of the third way**. Theologian Walter Klaassen says we are **neither Catholic nor Protestant**.

As Anabaptists, we are first of all **Christians**. Secondarily, we are **a certain kind of Christian**. Instead of using Anabaptist as a noun, I believe we should use it as an adjective to say, "I am an Anabaptist **Christian**."

Three Key Statements

What is an Anabaptist Christian? I would like to propose three key statements that I believe have to do with our core values and identity. The three statements are foundational to who we were 480 years ago at our beginning, who we are today at our best, and who we should continue to be in the future. Allow me to explore them one at a time. They are a modification of what Harold S. Bender's statement to the American Historical Society in 1943 called, ***The Anabaptist Vision***. The first one is about Jesus.

Jesus is the Centre of Our Faith

The first disciples centred their faith in Jesus. For three years, they ate, slept, and lived with Jesus. Slowly but surely, the disciples got to know Jesus as the **Master Teacher** as the **Compassionate Healer**, as the **Leader of a Movement**, as the **Saviour of the World**, and finally as **their Lord**. There was wholeness in how the disciples experienced Jesus.

Jesus loved them, challenged them, fed them, forgave them, and gave them a model for living. In response, they placed their confidence in him. They followed him. Christianity is discipleship. If you had asked those first disciples, I believe they would have said, "**Jesus is the centre of our faith!** We will follow him in daily life."

Constantine and Augustine

For two hundred fifty years the followers of Jesus were centred in Jesus. But then two men came on the scene that brought so many changes to the Christian faith that it became almost like another religion. One was a politician. The other was a theologian.

Constantine knew about Jesus, but he didn't know him in the same, personal way as the disciples had known him. He was politically motivated and one day marched his army down to the river, baptized them all, and declared Christianity to be an official religion of the Roman Empire. We would say that this was the fall of the church. The church was no longer in the world. The world was in the church!

A short time later, **Augustine** came on the scene. Some would call him the greatest theologian of the early church. But he had a different perspective on Jesus than did the first disciples. Instead of focusing on the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus as the disciples had done, Augustine focused on the death of Jesus. He skipped from "born of the Virgin Mary" to "suffered under Pontius Pilate." The **crucifix** became the central symbol of the Christian faith and Christ's death rather than his resurrection was re-enacted every Sunday in the mass. Instead of saying, **"The Living Jesus is the centre of our faith"** as the disciples had done, Augustine seemed to say, **"Christ's *death* is the centre of our faith."** There is a huge difference between those two statements!

For a thousand years, most of the priests and bishops, monks and nuns, focused on the death of Christ instead of on the life, the teachings, and the ongoing ministry of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Even today, most Christians in their understanding of salvation focus more on the death than on the life of Jesus.

The Reformation

Around 1500 AD, church leaders began to realize that something was drastically wrong. Through careful Bible study, **Martin Luther**, a German monk, together with Pastor **Ulrich Zwingli** in Switzerland, and others came to a new understanding of the Christian faith. They affirmed that salvation comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and not from doctrine, merit, or the sacraments. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther challenged the prevailing position of the church and the pope by nailing 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg. The reformation was launched.

But as time went on, Luther and Zwingli didn't follow through with the reformation. In their reforms, they basically went back only to Constantine in their politics and

to Augustine in their theology. They continued to focus on the death of Christ and all too often omitted the life, ministry and resurrected power of Jesus. They focused on who Jesus is rather than on what Jesus did. In their theories of the atonement and in their practice of baptism and communion, they continued to say with Constantine and Augustine, **"Christ's death is the centre of our faith."**

The Anabaptists

At this same time, three early Anabaptist Christians, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, came together in Zurich, Switzerland, for careful Bible study. A few years later, **Menno Simons**, a priest in Holland, joined the movement.

In their studies, they went all the way back to Jesus and the first disciples for their frame of reference. They loved the Bible verse in Hebrews that says, **"Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."** I Corinthians 3:11 became their motto, **"Other foundation can no one lay than the one that is already laid, and that foundation is Jesus Christ."** The Sermon on the Mount became their central manifesto.

In their Bible study, prayer, and fellowship groups, these early Anabaptist Christians established a personal relationship with Jesus, as had the first disciples. They personally experienced the love, challenge, instruction, forgiveness, and filling of the Spirit of Jesus! There was wholeness in their experience of Jesus. They got to know him as their Teacher, Saviour, and Lord. They did not merely worship him on Sunday. They followed him in daily life. If you had asked those first Anabaptists, I believe that they would have said with the first disciples, **"the Living Jesus is the centre of our faith!"**

"Other foundation can no one lay than the one that is already laid, and that foundation is Jesus Christ." -I Corinthians 3:11

All Christians would say that Jesus is the centre. But discipleship often means simply reading your Bible, praying and being nice to the people around you. There might be a good sense of piety but there is not a strong sense of discipleship, as we know it. The Anabaptists had what is called an **ethics-centred Christ**. The life and ministry of Jesus determined their ethics and their life. To be a Christian meant to take on the character and work of Jesus.

So what does it mean to be an Anabaptist Christian? It means that to be a Christian is to be a disciple. An Anabaptist Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, not merely a believer in Jesus. He or she has a personal relationship with Jesus. He or she reads the Bible from a Jesus point of view. Jesus is his or her master-teacher, saviour from sin and lord of Lords. A very powerful and **Living Jesus is at the centre of their faith**.

I consider myself an Anabaptist Christian. When I was baptized, Jesus was at the centre of that experience. When I read my Bible, I interpret it from a Jesus-centred point of view. When I make mistakes, I go to Jesus for forgiveness. And, when I need to make a decision, I ask, Jesus, "What would you do in this situation?"

As Anabaptist Christians, our identity is centred in a gutsy personal relationship with Jesus Christ. **Jesus is the centre of our faith!**

But there is more to our faith than that. Let's look at statement number two. It has to do with community.

Community is the Centre of our Life.

Jesus was a community builder! The first act of Jesus was to invite four fishermen and then twelve to be with him and to be with each other. **They ate together with glad and sincere hearts. They sang together, worked together,** and **climbed mountains together**. I wouldn't be surprised if they went swimming in the Jordan River together. They were like a family of brothers and sisters. Those first disciples experienced a profound sense of community! They were friends who stuck together closer than brothers.

When Jesus left, their sense of community continued. It did not matter if you were Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free, they were all one in the body of Christ. They continued to meet daily in the upper room and then in each other's homes. Acts 2:46 says, "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." The spirit of Jesus enabled them to love each other, challenge each other, forgive each other, care for each other, and give each other hope, just as when Jesus had been with them. If you would have asked those first disciples I believe they would have said, **"Christ-centred Community is the centre of our life!"**

For two hundred fifty years, the followers of Christ met in homes for fellowship and discernment. They had no church buildings. Wherever two or three committed followers were together Jesus was in their midst. They experienced a close sense of community day by day and week by week.

But then along came **Constantine and Augustine**. They brought so many changes to the church that it was almost like another church. Instead of emphasizing the presence of Christ in their midst as the disciples had done, they emphasized the organized church in the middle of the city. Instead of emphasizing small groups in homes, the attention was placed on great and ornate cathedrals. Eventually a cathedral was built in the centre of nearly every province of Europe.

Augustine contributed to this concept of church by emphasizing individual salvation and that individuals, like the wheat and the tares, exist together in large, impersonal congregations and communities.

For a thousand years, the church became largely institutional. The church as a warm community of believers dwindled. Instead of saying, **"Community is the centre of our life,"** as the early disciples had done, Constantine, Augustine and the people who followed them said, **"The church is in the centre of our community."** There is a huge difference between those statements!

Again, **Martin Luther** and **Ulrich Zwingli** realized that something was drastically wrong. Initially, Luther and

Zwingli agreed that the church should be a **community of believers** gathered around the Scriptures. They taught the **priesthood of all believers**. But they didn't follow through on their reforms. In effect, they went back only as far as Constantine and Augustine for their view of the church.

They kept the **state church** as the polity of the church. They kept the **cathedral** as the structure of the church. They kept **infant baptism** as the introductory rite into the church. And they kept **the sword** as the tool of discipline. Instead of saying, **"Christ-centred community is the centre of our life,"** as the disciples had done, they continued to say, with Constantine and Augustine, **"The church is in the centre of our community."**

Conrad Grebel, Feliz Manz, George Blaurock and our other Anabaptist forebears like Menno Simons had a different approach. They did not merely want to **reform** the church back to Augustine's time. They wanted to **restore** the church to its New Testament practice, form, and standards.

The **altar** had become the centre of focus for the Catholics and the **pulpit** had become the centre of focus for the Protestant reformers. Due to persecution, Anabaptist Christians were forced out of the cathedrals. They had neither altar nor pulpit. Instead, they gathered around their kitchen tables or in caves to study the Scriptures and to care for each other. As they met, they corporately experienced the love, instruction, challenge, forgiveness, and guidance of Jesus much as the first disciples had experienced him. If you had asked those first Anabaptist Christians, I believe they would have said with the first disciples, **"Christ-centred community is the centre of our life!"**

One of the reasons that teenagers find it so hard to be Christians today is that they experience so little support from the Christian community and have to contend with so many worldly values – concerning faith, materialism, their sexuality, and drugs and alcohol...If we could more fully enfold our youth in our communities so that they felt profoundly loved and supported, they might find it much less difficult to choose the values of the Christian community as their own, despite the pressures of their peers.

- Marva Dawn, ***Keeping the Sabbath Wholly***, 117

In our churches and seminaries, we have spent much time exploring the theology of our faith but very little time examining its form. That needs to be changed! The uniqueness of both the New Testament and the Anabaptist church is as much in its form as it is in its theology.

What is our form? For Anabaptist Christians it is crucial to think of the small group rather than the organized congregation as the basic unit of the church. Our sense of community is experienced best in the cell. A congregation is a congregation of small groups. If the church is where we have deep and personal fellowship, where we study the Scriptures together, and pray for each other, that happens best in small groups.

Some years ago, Pastor Yamada from Japan, came to the United States to explore the uniqueness of the Anabaptists. He found that 60 doctoral dissertations had been written on the subject. He read them all. When he was finished, he said, **"I believe the uniqueness of both the early church and the Anabaptist movement is that those early believers met in small groups where they confronted each other and made each other strong enough to confront the world."**

What does it mean to be an Anabaptist Christian? For me it means that family and small group are central to my understanding of the church. Wherever possible, I want to move from committee to community. My task is to invite people into this community. The Apostle John tells us, "To all who receive Jesus, to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God." The Anabaptist church is a family where the members experience satisfying fellowship, helpful guidance, and clear accountability. Our theology challenges us to move from committee to community. It calls us to invite people iinto community.

Anabaptist Christians experience **Christ-centred community as the centre of their life!**

There is a third key statement to which we need to give our attention. It has to do with how we see the world and a Christian's central task in it.

Reconciliation is the Centre of our Work.

The central problem of humanity is not the lack of finances, the lack of education, or the lack of power. **Our central problem is broken relationships.** From the very beginning of time, sin came into our world and broke our relationships with God, with ourselves, with each other, and indeed, with the whole creation.

The first disciples and the early church were not known for program, money, education, or power. They were known as a reconciled people who were engaged in reconciling others to God, to themselves, and to each other. They were passionate about reconciling individuals to God and they were deliberate about reconciling people to each other. They wanted everyone they met to be reconciled to both God and to each other. Reconciliation was both individual and corporate.

Reconciliation is different than appeasement. To appease means to pacify without solving the root problems. Jesus said, "I did not come to bring peace but the sword." He knew that to reach peace, disciples would need to go through truth and therefore said, "You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free." With his words and actions Jesus reconciled those first disciples both to himself and to each other.

Jesus sent the first disciples out as reconcilers. "As the Father has sent me, so send I you," he told them. Early disciples like Philip, Peter, and Paul were passionate about reconciling people to God and they were deliberate about reconciling people to each other. They wanted everyone they met to be reconciled. As they reconciled people to God and to each other, the church grew. It grew by hundreds and thousands until groups were meeting nearly everywhere in the Roman Empire. The Romans said, "Behold, how they love one another!" By the third century there were over 350 reconciled/reconciling communities in the Middle East. If you would have asked them, I believe those first disciples would have said with the Apostle Paul, "We are ambassadors of reconciliation; **Reconciliation is the centre of our work!**"

But with the coming of **Constantine** and **Augustine**, this also changed. Establishing order and building cathedrals was central to Constantine's work. Administering the sacraments was central to Augustine's work.

Augustine believed that the sacraments were essential for salvation. He was sacramental and reasoned that because of original sin, babies needed to be baptized. Because of total depravity, sinners needed to receive the mass regularly. Because of purgatory, prayers need to be said to the saints. Instead of saying, **"Reconciliation is the centre of our work"** as the disciples had done, leaders of the Catholic Church tended to say, "Administering the ***sacraments* is the centre of our work**." Again, there is a huge difference between those two statements!

Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin saw that something was drastically wrong. As a result, they de-emphasized the sacraments and gave priority to preaching. The pulpit, instead of the altar, became the centre of the church. If you had asked them, they would have probably said, **"Preaching is the centre of our work."**

But what did they preach? They preached an Augustinian gospel rooted in concepts of original sin, total depravity, predestination, and justification of war. Their gospel largely omitted the life, ministry, and reconciling work of the resurrected Jesus. They overlooked the free will of human beings to choose it.

As a result, our Anabaptist forebears were not satisfied. They insisted on going **all the way back to Jesus and the early church for their faith, their sense of community, and for their work.** Believing that the Great Commission applied to every Christian, they went everywhere preaching the gospel so that people would be reconciled to God. Some would have said, like many do today that **"Evangelism is the centre of our work."**

They also worked for corporate reconciliation. When there was disagreement in their group, they worked for reconciliation according to Matthew 18. When there was conflict in their world, they refused to take part in violence seeking to overcome evil with good. In their own way, they would have said, **"Peace is the centre of our work."**

For the early church and Anabaptist Christians evangelism and peace came together in their understanding that God's love and forgiveness was meant unconditionally for both their enemies and the enemies of God. Believing that the Great Commission applied to every Christian, they went everywhere preaching a gospel of reconciliation. Believing that the Great Commandment was central, they worked for reconciliation according to Matthew 18 and taught unconditional love for both God and neighbour. They understood the church to be a group of reconciled men and women, Jews and Greeks, slaves and free folk who were reconciling others to God and to each other. If you had asked them, I believe they would have said **"Reconciliation is the centre of our work."**

Reconciling husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, teachers and students, and people of different races and nationalities to God and to each other is a priority for Anabaptists. True Anabaptist Christians will share the gospel unconditionally and treat people the same no matter their gender, race, or socio/economic standing. Reconciliation, both individual and corporate, has been a core Anabaptist value for 480 years. I pray that it will continue to be one of our core values indefinitely because **reconciliation is the centre of our work!**

Conclusion

I would be the first to admit that as Anabaptist people we are far from perfect. Too often, we have gone back only as far as the 16th century for clarification of our faith and values. We do well to pause there to learn what true discipleship meant at that time in history, but then we need to continue going back all the way back to Jesus and the New Testament church.

As Anabaptist Christians, we have much to learn from other Christians including Constantine and Augustine. Each Christian and each group of Christians has been given a strength or spiritual gift from which the whole body can benefit. We need to keep these in perspective. God will have more to work with if we increase, rather than decrease, dialogue with our Catholic and Protestant brothers and sisters.

As we come together with other Christians for dialogue and ministry, we need to recognize with thankful hearts that God has much to teach us and also has given us Anabaptist Christians much to share. He has given us some very good food that is meant not only for us but for all people everywhere. Our purpose is to make disciples of all peoples as best we can; teaching and showing them that **Jesus is the centre of our faith! Community is the centre of our life!** And **Reconciliation is the centre of our work!**

What is an Anabaptist Christian?

Jesus is the centre of our faith!
Community is the centre of our life!
Reconciliation is the centre of our work!

Available as a brochure at:
www.anabaptist.asn.au

Evil and Forgiveness

Mark Hurst

I've been collecting items in the news about "evil." Here are some examples of what I found:

An article in the Canadian news magazine ***Macleans*** entitled "Taking a stand on 'evil'" says:

Public Safety Minister Anne McLellan strongly suggested some of Canada's judges need to wake up to the fact that big-time marijuana growing is a dangerous crime that calls for serious prison time. Speaking out after the slaying of four Mounties in her home province of Alberta, McLellan pointed to the stiffer penalties for grow-op convictions allowed under the Liberal government's overhaul of marijuana laws. The new legislation would double to 14 years the maximum prison sentence for being convicted of cultivating more than 50 marijuana plants.

The Minister's response to evil, like so many other politicians who realize it wins votes, is to legislate for longer, harsher prison terms.

In the 10 March 2005 edition of the ***Christian Science Monitor***, an article called "Calling Evil By Name" said this:

A word once reserved for atrocities is now used liberally...After September 11, it became part of the political discourse ("axis of evil") and has occupied Americans struggling to make sense of why such events happen. Pop culture incorporates it into movies and TV shows, and books about evil now crowd store shelves, with more on the way.

"We're now using the word everywhere," says Frederick Schmidt, an associate professor of Christian spirituality at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. "The events since 9/11 have brought it back into the centre of American vocabulary, which is both a bad and a good thing."

Though use of the word "evil" is on the rise, Americans are finding it difficult to agree on what it means. Influenced by religious or cultural values, they tend to use it to describe both a supernatural force and something humans create. In some cases, the tag is pinned onto people; in others, to their actions. Many adopt the "I know it when I see it" definition.

The next two news articles from CBC news in Canada fit into the "I know it when I see it" category:

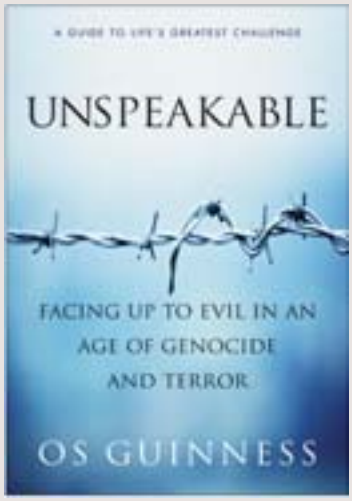
Teen charged after park booby-trapped with glass shards

BURLINGTON, ONTARIO - Two teenagers (ages 14 and 15) turned themselves in to police after a playground in Burlington, Ont., was booby-trapped with shards of glass. Halton Regional Police charged one of the two Burlington teenagers with mischief. The other is considered a witness, but police said they expect to make more arrests and lay more charges. Shards of glass were found on the weekend, glued to slides and on top of monkey bars in the city's Desjardines Park.

Unspeakable: Facing Up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror

Os Guinness, HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

Os Guinness spoke about his new book in a recent interview in ***Christianity Today*** (03/10/2005) .
http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/110/42.0.html



When asked why he wrote this book he said,

"...evil has somehow been the horizon of my life ever since I was born in China in World War II. Twenty million were killed during the Japanese invasion that swirled around us, and five million—including my own two brothers—died in a terrible famine in Henan province, in three nightmarish months. My parents and I nearly died, too. Later, I witnessed the climax of the Chinese revolution and the beginning of Mao's repression.

So my own life challenged me to think about the problem of evil at a very early age. This left me wanting to address what I have never seen elsewhere: a book that tackled both the personal and the public issues together: Why do bad things happen to good people? And what does it say of us, after the most murderous century in human history, that the people who did these things are the same species we are?"

He speaks about modern evil.

"I am not saying we are more sinful or more evil than previous generations, but that we are more modern. The modern world has simultaneously magnified the destructiveness of evil and marginalized traditional responses to evil. From the Armenian massacre in World War I, through the Ukraine terror famine, Auschwitz, the Gulag, the Cultural Revolution, the killing fields of Cambodia, down to Rwanda, the Sudan, and the Congo, the terrible toll reaches into the hundreds of millions of humans killed by their fellow human beings. And the reason for the destructiveness is not weapons of mass destruction. The reason lies in the unholy marriage of modern industrialization and modern processes and attitudes with killing. And by marginalizing traditional responses, I don't just mean that notions such as disturbance and dysfunction have replaced sin, and "grief counsellors" have replaced pastors. We have gone far further, and as Roger Shattuck and others have pointed out, we have destroyed so many moral boundaries and limits that we have made evil cool."

In the Conclusion to his book (234-237), he lists three lessons we should learn about evil:

First, we must come to grips with the nature of our own humanity and the evil evident in our hearts and in our world.

Second, we must each consider our own response to the evil of our times.

Third – and most importantly of all – we must each decide for ourselves the faith by which we live, and the faith by which we understand and respond to evil and suffering.

- MSH

The mayor of Burlington, a city of about 150,000 people 60 kilometres west of Toronto, said after the discovery that whoever did it was a "sick individual."

Suspect sought in beach-blade incident
Toronto, Canada - Police said Tuesday that they were looking for a "person of interest" after razor blades were found in the sand at a waterfront volleyball court.

The investigation began Sunday, after tournament organizers found some of the blades, which had been embedded in pieces of wood and hidden in the sand at Woodbine Beach on Ashbridge's Bay.

A total of 13 blades were pulled from the sand, and are now being examined by forensic experts.

Investigators say a man carrying a black bag was spotted in the area between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m. on Sunday. They are appealing for anyone with information about who might have planted the blades to come forward.

Someone who glues glass shards to children's play equipment or plants razor blades in a sand volleyball court is doing something evil but isn't the Mayor right when he said, "...that whoever did it was a 'sick individual?'" How do we treat sick people? Is working for healing a way of dealing with evil?

Another question I have been pondering is "Can there be forgiveness in the face of great evil?"

We've probably all heard world leaders talking about evil lately. U.S. president George W. Bush talks about it often in statements like the following:

We're confident...that history has an author who fills time and eternity with his purpose. We know that evil is real, but good will prevail against it. This is the teaching of many faiths, and in that assurance we gain strength for a long journey...Our war that we now fight is against terror and evil...Our struggle is going to be long and difficult. But we will prevail. We will win. Good will overcome evil...we are fighting evil, and we will continue to fight evil, and we will not stop until we defeat evil...We will fight and defeat the forces of evil wherever they are.

Anybody who tries to affect the lives of our good citizens is evil...But we can overcome evil. We're good. We're good-hearted people, and the boys and girls of America are showing the world just that. We don't fight a religion — no, we fight evil...our struggle is against evil people — evil people that claim they're religious, but are not.

Os Guinness addresses this "us and them" duality in his book ***Unspeakable: Facing Up To Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror***. He says:

The same potential for evil and proneness to evil is in every one of us..."If only there were evil people somewhere," Solzhenitsyn wrote in ***The Gulag Archipelago,*** *"insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"* (161)

...the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard spoke about evil after the Bali Bombing:

This foul deed—this wicked, evil act of terrorists...All of us have a right to feel a sense of deep anger and a deep determination to do everything we can... to bring to justice those who are responsible for this crime. We owe it to those who died, we owe it to those who have been injured and we also owe it to a proper sense of justice. Nothing can excuse this behaviour. No cause—however explained, however advocated, however twisted, however spun—can possibly justify the indiscriminate, unprovoked slaughter of innocent people. That is what has occurred here. We must do all we can, as a nation and as a community, to mete out a proper response—a measured, sober, effective response—which brings to justice, if we can, those who are responsible. (14 October 2002)

"Justice" here means *punitive* justice or *retributive* justice. It is the kind of justice that says, "If you hurt us, you deserve to be hurt in return."

Most of us can probably recite personal examples of evil we face daily in the home, at school, or at work. Institutions can be places that allow evil to flourish and the church is not exempt from this. M. Scott Peck in his book ***People of the Lie*** talks about evil people doing quite well in churches because in church we are too busy being "nice" and we don't know how to handle people whose behaviour is evil.

This thinking - that the way we deal with people we disagree with is to label them as "evil" and then get rid of them - is in the church too. I came across this letter in a SoJo Mailing from one of the columnists. It demonstrates the danger of this kind of labelling:

On a more personal note, I recently received a note from a SojoMail reader full of profanity and insults. My attacker closed his note wondering how I could call myself a Christian, taking the position I do...I usually do not take the time to respond to such letters ...but this time I did write back a short note asking how he, in turn, could call himself a Christian and use such profane, violent words toward another human being. His e-mail back to me was revealing, albeit shocking: "I can write to you as I like, for you are not a human being. You have forfeited that right; you are nothing but pond scum."

That's the theological loophole for what passes as Christian morality these days. Simply demonstrate why the other person, or race of people, has forfeited their status as a human being, and you can do with them what you will. By the way, that is the same theological loophole used by the church in Latin America to justify the massacre of millions of Native Americans during the Conquest; they were not deemed human beings. (SoJo Mail, 9/22/04)

Evil is not just a modern-day phenomenon. Nahum is a biblical prophet who wrote about the ancient evil city Nineveh. The site of Nineveh lies on the east bank of the River Tigris in modern Iraq. In the summer of 612 BC, Nineveh fell to the combined forces of the Medes and

Babylonians. Occupation continued, however, for a further 1000 years before Nineveh was eclipsed by the city of Mosul, on the other side of the river.

Nahum wrote this about Nineveh: "Ah! City of bloodshed, utterly deceitful, full of booty – no end to the plunder!" (3:1) When Nineveh fell, Nahum said: "All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For who has ever escaped your endless cruelty?" (3:19)

One online commentary says:

...[It was] one of the most bloodthirsty and cruel civilizations ever known; the Assyrian empire and its capital city of Nineveh. When such an oppressive enemy is dealt with, then those who have suffered do find relief and comfort when the enemy falls.

Regarding the extreme cruelty of Assyria, their own records bragging of their victories is proof enough. Far from trying to cover their brutality, they actually gloried in it. Their monuments and histories brag about how "space failed for corpses" and about "how unsparing a destroyer is Assyria's goddess Ishtar." They brag about how high the pyramids of human heads were which they built from their conquered foes and how they burned cities and impaled human beings and cut off hands and flayed bodies and so forth. Nahum announces that the time for divine judgment has arrived. Such words of destruction indeed would be words of comfort to a world so tormented by Assyrian cruelty. Perhaps, too, we can better understand Jonah's hesitancy to take the Lord's warning to Nineveh a century before. He did not want Nineveh to repent. He wanted it to be destroyed. He felt it would be much better that way, the problem was that it had not been his decision to make.

Jonah probably had the same view of God that Nahum had: *"The lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty."* (1:3) The Lord will not let Nineveh off the hook for all the evil they have done – they must pay the price of justice!

Look at the story of Jonah:

1:1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 1:2 "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me."

In these first two verses, we have two key words that the writer uses throughout the story to tie it together – *great* and *evil*. *

Nineveh is a "great" city. We'll see a "great" storm and a "great" fish. Jonah experiences "great" anger at "great evil." English versions of the text use different words at times but the Hebrew word describing each of these means "great."

The other key word is "evil" and again English translations use different words – wickedness (1:2), calamity (1:7, 8), evil ways (3:8, 10), calamity (3:10), displeasing (4:1), and punishing (4:2). Watch for these key words throughout the story.

1:3 But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Again the storyteller plays with words. There is a "downward" progression for Jonah. Here he goes down to Joppa. Later he goes down in the ship, down in the fish, and still later down to Sheol, the place of the dead.

1:4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up.

There is some humour here. The text literally says: "The ship thought itself to be breaking up." The ship thinks like the computer does in ***Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy***.

1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw [hurled] **the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep** [the sleep of the dead] **1:6 The captain came and said to him, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish."**

This command uses the same Hebrew verb forms that God used in verse one.

1:7 The sailors said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity [evil] **has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 1:8 Then they said to him, "Tell us why this calamity** [evil] **has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"**

1:9 "I am a Hebrew," he replied. "I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." 1:10 Then the men [not called sailors anymore] **were even more afraid, and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so. 1:11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. 1:12 He said to them, "Pick me up and throw** [hurl] **me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you."**

1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. 1:14 Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." 1:15 So they picked Jonah up and threw him [hurled] **into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.**

These "pagan" sailors are more ethical in their behavior than Jonah. They try to save him and "feared" God more than Jonah did. They go from being "sailors" to "men" – they become more personalized through the story.

1:17 But the LORD provided a large [great] **fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. 2:1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the**

fish, 2:2 saying, "I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. 2:3 You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. 2:4 Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?' 2:5 The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head 2:6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O LORD my God. 2:7 As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 2:8 Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. 2:9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!"

2:10 Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land. 3:1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 3:2 "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."

3:3 So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. 3:4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" [a mere five words in Hebrew!]

3:5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. 3:6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 3:7 Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. 3:8 Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. 3:9 Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

3:10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity [evil] **that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.**

4:1 But this was very displeasing [great evil] **to Jonah, and he became angry.**

Evil has been dealt with in this story so as "to promote life on land and sea, for the people and for the animals" but for Jonah, he only saw "great evil". Our two key words come together here.

4:2 He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. 4:3 And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4:4 And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

Jonah doesn't answer God this first time. He is holding on to his view of God that like Nahum says *"the Lord will by no means clear the guilty."* Jonah knows that God is compassionate and he doesn't like that. He wants God to show punitive justice. Nineveh should pay for its crimes!

4:5 Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth** [Sukkot] **for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

4:6 The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush.

The plant transforms Jonah's "great evil" into "great joy."

4:7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. 4:8 When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

4:9 But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." 4:10 Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. 4:11 And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

Jonah's problem with God is that God is not "just" enough. God lets compassion get in the way of justice. Jonah believed Nineveh's "repentance" – the sackcloth and ashes bit – was not sufficient for their sin to be forgiven. They should be punished!

Jonah is like the older brother in the prodigal son story who stands outside the feast for his younger brother and pouts (Luke 15:25-32). He is like the labourers in the parable in Matthew 20 who worked all day and got paid the same amount as the labourers who only worked one hour. They got the same pay from the landowner but thought he was unjust. They balked at his compassion.

One commentator talks about this as the "Mystery of Divine Compassion."

*The Christian church must never ignore the cry for justice. Many Christians, however, have sought to live out the divine **yet** as stated by Abraham Heschel at the conclusion of his comments on Jonah: '**Yet**, beyond justice and anger lies the mystery of compassion.' The mystery of*

Jonah's problem with God is that God is not "just" enough. God lets compassion get in the way of justice.

compassion often appears as nonsense in a world more comfortable with retributive or even distributive justice. Uriel Simon forcefully states Jonah's concern: 'What remains of the rule of law when iniquity that merits annihilation can be wiped away by a few days of penance.' Yet, beyond justice lies the mystery of compassion. (Eugene Roop, ***Ruth, Jonah, Esther***, 155)

Justice and the rule of law provide fairness and coherence in the world. Divine compassion can undermine that coherence and thus sometimes even feel unfair. Which do we prefer?

Each year Jewish people read the story of Jonah on Yom Kippur, their day of atonement. Janet Gaines in a book she wrote on Jonah says this:

In synagogue tradition, the book of Jonah is considered a peak of moral instruction. Far more than a story about a giant fish, it brings home some of the most important teachings of Judaism: the God of Israel belongs to anyone who seeks the deity; all human beings, regardless of nationality, are children of God; God is merciful and forgiving, longing for people to turn away from evil; everyone is capable of abandoning evil and yielding to good; all humanity has the responsibility to lead a moral life. (Janet Gaines, ***Forgiveness In A Wounded World***, 149)

She goes on to say:

Yom Kippur reminds Jews that it is they, through Jonah, who bring this message to the Gentiles. Without ceasing to be a Hebrew or forsaking his own people, Jonah teaches this lesson of universal forgiveness to the world. (150) *...On the holiest day of the year, Jews allow the Ninevites to become a model of repentance for the Jewish community to emulate.* (151)

The hated, evil, violent Ninevites are a model of repentance. Our enemies can teach us something about God, compassion, and forgiveness.

There are plenty of examples from the New Testament about God forgiving and calling us to do the same, but Janet Gaines reminds us that this message is in the Old Testament too:

The fascinating aspect about biblical stories is that God dares to be the deity who sides with Cain and his descendants. The Almighty refuses to allow anyone to kill Cain...God reunites Esau and Jacob as well as Joseph and his brothers, allowing reconciliation to take place. And instead of punishing Moses for slaying an Egyptian, God selects Moses to confront Pharoah and lead the children of Israel out of bondage. This is no ordinary God. This is one who dares to forgive and encourages people to follow the divine example, though they cannot always follow through. Regardless of calamities past and present, starting with the characters in Genesis and going to the present day, God stands ready to take the only action that has a chance of breaking the cycle of violence. God forgives." (154)

God forgives and calls us to do the same. Evil cannot be overcome with more evil. Evil is overcome with good.

Os Guinness says, "At the end of the day, it is challenging and sobering to look at human evil in the white of the eye. But from the very depths of my being, with no attempt at propaganda or special pleading, I would say after years of looking into the question, that there is no answer to human evil deeper and more adequate than the answer that is ours as followers of Jesus. But we need to speak it out, and act it out, with clarity, courage, and love today. The world is hungry for it, and so are many in the church." (***Christianity Today***, 03/10/2005)

May God grant each of us the grace to forgive our enemies and to return good for evil wherever we encounter it.

* I used Eugene Roop's commentary on Jonah for much of the commentary in this article. ***Ruth, Jonah, Esther***, Herald Press, Believers Church Bible Commentary Series, 2002.

Listening for the "silences" in the Creeds

or why getting too close to the empire can have unfortunate side-effects

Doug Hynd

In my varied ecclesial sojourning, I joined in gathered worship using the structure of the Anglican Prayer Book on a large number of occasions over the past thirty years. In that context, I first became familiar with the creeds. It is only over the last couple of years though, that I have started to pay attention to the silences in the Creeds. In the discussion that follows, I will be referring specifically to the Nicene Creed.

My awareness that there might be something significant in what the creed(s) **did not say, in their silences**, and that this was not just a matter of intellectual interest, arose a couple of years ago when I read study material prepared by Stuart Murray for the Anabaptist Network. The discussion that sparked my interest, incidentally, has been included in his recent book ***Post-Christendom*** (Paternoster, 2004). Once alerted to the issue, I found myself paying more and closer attention to the creed, listening for significant elements in the Biblical narrative that have been omitted.

I want to draw attention to three silences in the Nicene Creed that have become noisily present to me at various times over the past couple of years. Sunday morning by Sunday morning, these silences now speak loudly too me as I join in the recital of the Creed. Along with each of these silences, I want to briefly note some of the implications of that silence for the mission of the Christian church and the shape of Christian discipleship.

Making Jesus more acceptable to the Empire?

In the course of his account of the emergence of Christendom, Murray draws attention to the process of making Jesus less disturbing and more acceptable to the imperial powers as it is reflected in the development of the creeds. The case here is a subtle one and not an issue that has received much attention till recently. Stuart Murray notes that Jesus' life between his birth and his death is absent from the creedal affirmations. Where are his miracles, teaching and subversive lifestyle and why are they not affirmed in the creeds?

Jesus' life and teaching are no longer the focus of attention. Christendom was comfortable with the divine Jesus - and with belief that Jesus was also human but struggled with the challenging reality of that human life. Although the creeds declare his humanity, this seems little more than an abstract philosophical principle. The Jesus in whom Christians expressed their faith as they repeated the creeds was an abstract exalted figure, remote and powerful, a heavenly counterpart of the Christian emperor, no longer disturbing the status quo, Jesus was worshipped but not followed. This has left a lasting legacy in European Christianity: the church was now at the centre but Jesus was consigned to the margins. (pp.123-124)

The Jesus of the creeds is certainly confessed to be human. But it seems to be a very generic form of humanity that is preserved and acknowledged over against those who wanted to spiritualise Jesus. Certainly, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, but we are given no hints as to why that might have occurred. There is nothing in the creeds about the fair reign of God and its coming that Jesus associated himself with. Nothing about Jesus ministry of healing and teaching that confronted and challenged the powers of his day. Why are we not called to confess that we are committing ourselves to follow this Jesus who healed the sick, who taught the way of peace and the coming of God's kingdom?

An abstract humanity leaves the way open to an abstract and disembodied discipleship, in which faith can be easily detached from the created world and its critical implications for social and political life screened out from our sight.

God - but which God?

We confess God as creator of heaven and earth in the creeds but taken all in all, this is a very generic God. There is a yawning and historically devastating silence here. There is no mention that God as the Creator of heaven and earth is also the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the covenanting God, who called the people of Israel.

The silence in the creeds about the God of Israel, the God with whom Jesus identified himself, has meant that the church has been able to distance itself from its connection with Israel. This connection again has screened out from our attention at a critical moment in every service that the God we are confessing is the liberating God of the Exodus. It has enabled us to forget that we are confessing faith in the God of the prophets with their passionate reminders of the linkage between right action in the world and right worship in the gathered community.

This silence has enabled Christians to remain "comfortable" with the Jewish-Christian schism. How could we have confessed that the God we worship is the God of Israel and then condoned the anti-Jewish pogroms over the centuries?

Why believing and not belonging and behaving as well?

The other significant reality to note in our consideration of the "silences" in the Creeds is their rhetorical structure. They are phrased solely in terms of believing. There is a silence about "belonging" and "behaving". Large elements of the New Testament are totally ignored in the exclusive focus on believing. Why do we say, for example, that we "believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic church" instead of confessing that we belong to the holy, catholic and apostolic church?

The focus of the Gospels for example is on "belonging" through discipleship, following Jesus and "behaving" shaped by Jesus teaching about how disciples should live. Paul spends much of his time in his letters teasing out the implications of "belonging" and 'behaving", around the theme of membership of the "body of Christ".

The obsession with "believing" at the expense of how we live and who we belong to, has been disastrous. We have been able to claim that we are orthodox in belief while totally ignoring issues of belonging to the community of faith and behaving, living out a life which carries the authenticity of being conformed to Jesus' teaching.

On this latter silence, the contrast between the Creed and the Unison Reading B for congregational recital in the most recent ***Mennonite Confession of Faith*** is striking. Both forms for congregational recital suggest at least something of what has been lost by the exclusive focus in the creeds on believing. (**See Appendix on page 13**)

While the first stanza of the Unison Reading commences with a statement of belief, the next stanza moves to covenant renewal and commitment. The confession here involves the church as claiming their identity (belonging). The third stanza moves to a commitment to following Jesus in life (behaving) before returning to the theme of identifying as the people of God gathered in worship, witness and hope. This last stanza includes elements relating to belonging, behaving and believing as a community.

The obsession with "believing" at the expense of how we live and who we belong to, has been disastrous.

The Unison Reading from ***The Confession of Faith*** not only shifts the focus of confession from "believing" but also directs our attention to some specifics of what Jesus actually taught. Unfortunately, however, they share the large "silence" of the Nicene Creed about the character of God as the God of Israel.

Conclusion

Listening for the "silences" in the creed has made me increasingly aware of how the theology expressed in liturgy can become a subtle means of blunting the critical radical challenge of Jesus and the God of Israel to the powers that be and what the call to discipleship requires.

While those who were responsible for the Creed were seeking to be faithful to the gospel in their time and place, and should be honoured for that faithfulness, that does not remove the results of their activity to some timeless realm beyond questioning. Looking back, we can see how the context of the time and the movement of the church toward an accommodation with the empire influenced what was said, how it was said, and what was not said.

Appendix

Unison Reading B

We believe in God,
Creator and Sustainer of the universe,
who in love and holiness has called forth
a people of faith,
who has spoken to us in Jesus Christ,
the Word of God become flesh,
in whom Scripture has its centre,
the one crucified, resurrected,
and exalted for our sake,
our Saviour from the dominion of sin and evil,
our peace and our reconciliation,
our Lord and the head of the church,
through whom God sends the Holy Spirit,
the source of our life and the guarantee
of our redemption.

We renew our covenant in Christ's church,
the new community called to proclaim
and to be a sign of the reign of God,
the assembly of those who have responded in faith
to Jesus Christ,
the society established and sustained by the Holy Spirit,
to interpret Scripture, the trustworthy standard
for faith and life,
to carry on Jesus' ministry in word and deed,
to call for repentance and make disciples
of all peoples,
to baptize believers and to share the Lord's Supper,
to offer God's forgiveness and restoration
to those who sin,
to use our gifts and abilities for God's service,
to live in mutual love, order, and unity,
so that the church may become one new humanity,
a light to the world.

We commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ
in his path through suffering to new life,
relying on the power of the Holy Spirit
and the gift of God's grace,
becoming conformed to Christ rather than to evil
in the world,
being transformed into the divine image
in which humanity was created.
As Christ's community of disciples,
faithful to his covenant, we are called
to life in the Spirit and relationship with God
through Christ,
to chastity and loving faithfulness to marriage vows,
to right stewardship of all that God has entrusted to us,
to the way of peace, loving enemies
and practicing justice,
to deeds of compassion and reconciliation
in holiness of life.

We are the people of God,
gathering to worship the one true God,
who is three-in-one.
We are God's holy nation,
giving our allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord of lords,
living now according to the pattern of God's future.
We place our hope in the reign of God and its fulfilment,
in the resurrection of the dead,
in God's final victory over evil,
and in that day when Christ will come again
in glory and judgment
to gather his church to reign with him
in righteousness and peace.
To God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations forever and ever! Amen!

AROUND THE NETWORK

Jill and Thorwald Lorenzen and Moriah Hurst

During the weekend of 25-26 June, farewell celebrations were held in Canberra for Thorwald and Jill Lorenzen. They are completing ten years of service to Canberra Baptist Church and for Thorwald, over forty years of service as a Baptist minister and teacher. God's blessings on you both as you enter retirement (sort of).

Moriah is completing her time as Youth Worker at the church and heading to the USA to begin an M-Div at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.

We need to learn to turn our interruptions into opportunities. We need to find a way of developing the art of embracing each difficult problem that we come across, every difficult person that we meet, and every frustration that we encounter, as a wonderful opportunity to express the spirit of compassion, the power of love and the possibility of justice.

- Dave Andrews, *Christi-Anarchy*, p. 116

BOOKS AND RESOURCES

Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross:
Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition,
Hans Boersma, Baker Academic, 2004

Hans Boersma has recently been appointed to the J.I. Packer Chair of Theology at Regent College in Canada. In this lucid and wide-ranging book, Boersma tackles head-on one of the most controversial questions in contemporary theological discussion – the extent to which traditional theologies of atonement implicate God in violence and thus serve to underwrite violence and abuse in human relationships. Much has been written on this subject in recent years, although, as Boersma observes, "the issue of the relationship between atonement and violence has hardly been discussed at all within the evangelical orbit" (195). Boersma acknowledges the importance of the question, even if he considers many of the criticisms levelled against traditional atonement theology to be seriously exaggerated.

Boersma makes many valuable observations in the course of his discussion. His use of the metaphor of hospitality offers a fresh and suggestive way to conceive of God's grace disclosed in the cross. His insistence that the problem of divine violence is present in all the traditional atonement models, not just the satisfaction model, is important for critics of penal substitution to hear. So too his argument that the insights of each model ought to be combined rather than viewed as alternatives, with Ireneaus' brilliant theology of recapitulation proving that such an integration is possible. Also valuable is Boersma's penetrating critique of the way in which individualistic conceptions of election, double-predestination, and limited atonement in the Calvinist tradition have served to inscribe violence on the heart of God. From a different angle, he endorses Milbank's critique of Girard's famous theory of mimetic desire as also depending on an ontology of violence. Yet Boersma is not persuaded by Milbank's insistence that the church alone is where God's non-violent justice is to be found. Radical Orthodoxy, Boersma argues, confuses the *centrality* of the church in God's purposes with the *monopoly* of the church. In the best spirit of the Reformed tradition, Boersma insists that Christians ought to be engaged in pursuing justice in the public as well as the ecclesial sphere. Beyond these and other points, I also appreciated the general tone of Boersma's discussion. It is marked by a gentleness and generosity of spirit that one doesn't naturally associate with Reformed theologians.

Yet there are features of Boersma's case that I found less than satisfying. For all his erudition and analysis, ultimately Boersma does little to resolve the problem of divine violence as such. He does not wrestle with the immense hermeneutical and moral problems created by the violence ascribed to God in the biblical record. His solution is to argue that violence is not an inherently negative reality; there is "good" violence as well as bad. In a sinful world violence is necessary to defend the boundaries which enable hospitality to function. In such a world God's employs "redemptive" violence, a violence that is justified by the need to uphold monotheism, to punish immorality, and to protect the poor and underprivileged.

This is also how the violence of the cross is to be understood – although, as I read him, Boersma never really explains *why* God *had* to use violent punishment in order to vouchsafe eschatological hospitality. The meaning of hospitality's "boundaries" in connection with the atonement is never spelled out in detail. With Augustine (162), Boersma seems to take for granted that retributive punishment resolves the problem of human guilt. But, to my mind, it is not punishment that removes our guilt but rather the grace of forgiveness, and grace, by definition, cannot be merited or purchased by punishment. If there is a penal dimension to the cross, it is not a matter of God administering retributive punishment on sinners but of Christ's voluntary self-identification with the plight of enslaved humanity languishing under the punishing lordship of sin.

Boersma makes an important point when he argues that God's redemptive entry to a world pervaded by sin and violence meant that God had to get "messed up" with violence too. This is one way of beginning to make sense of divinely-endorsed violence in Scripture and in the atonement. But surely the story of the cross is one in which God works ultimate redemption *in the midst* of violence but not by violent means. God does not add his own "just" violence to the demonic violence of crucifixion. Boersma is right to observe that all atonement theology involves God in violence. But it is the nature and purpose of that involvement that is crucial to specify. God's involvement is as victorious victim, not as righteous perpetrator.

At several points Boersma repudiates Christian pacifism on the grounds that absolute non-violence is impossible on this side of the eschaton. Violence permeates the very fabric of the created order, so there is no escaping its reach. Boersma accepts the Augustinian understanding of violence as any act that contravenes the rights of another and causes injury to life, property or person. "Any use of force or coercion that involves some kind of hurt or injury – whether the coercion is physical or non-physical – is a form of violence" (47). With this broad understanding he is not only able to charge Wink and other Christian activists with making arbitrary distinctions between violence and non-physical forms of coercion but also to snare Jesus himself in the web of violence. Jesus' protest in the temple was "a rather violent action" (92) and many of his words and actions "encroached on people's personal, space and well-being" (92). The God who meets us in Jesus is one who "avoids violence wherever possible" (54), but who is still prepared to act and speak violently when needed.

But this broad definition of violence hinders rather than helps moral analysis. Certainly there are similarities between coercion and violence. But it is misleading to lump all forms coercion under the generic rubric of

violence. What distinguishes them is just as important as what resemblances they share. It is better to envisage a continuum from complete non-resistance at one end to instrumental uses of lethal violence at the other, and to plot various levels and styles of persuasion or coercion between these points. The term "violence" should be reserved for those actions that are intended to kill or violate or physically hurt or disempower or cause severe emotional harm to another person, as a means of exerting control over them against their will. Both intention and impact need to be present for an action to be interpreted or experienced as violence.

There is also a difference between *violence*, which intends to cause significant harm, and *force*, which uses limited coercion with the intention to restrain or protect. A distinction exists, too, between violent *events*, like car accidents or hurricanes, which result in harm, and violent *actions*, which are deliberately intended to harm. For unintentional events, "violence" is best seen as a metaphor for the sheer impact of the occurrence (e.g., a violent storm). Similarly for intentional acts that cause lesser harm, it is better to use an adjective (e.g., verbal violence) in order to establish an analogy but not an identity with physical violence that causes lasting damage.

These distinctions are never cut and dried. But it is more helpful to attempt to make such discriminations than it is to define violence in such an all-inclusive way that it becomes meaningless to speak of any normative commitment to non-violence. To do so is a bit like saying that sexual fidelity is impossible to attain in a sinful world because everyone is caught up in the sexual brokenness of humanity. Or that because everyone experiences lustful desires it is arbitrary to forbid lustful actions. Few theologians are prepared to argue that, because Jesus highlights the kinship between adultery and lustful thoughts, adultery is a sad necessity in a fallen world, or even potentially beneficial!

Boersma is mistaken, I think, to assume that a Christian commitment to non-violence is a commitment to *absolute* non-violence. It is, rather, a commitment to stop at a particular point on the continuum, just as Jesus himself did, even if the transition points are, as in all continuums, fuzzy. Christian pacifism insists that there is a substantial moral difference between non-lethal forms of coercion and the intentional taking of human life or the inflicting lasting damage on people. Acts of intentional violence are not appropriate for those called to bear witness to the inbreaking of eschatological peace in Jesus Christ.

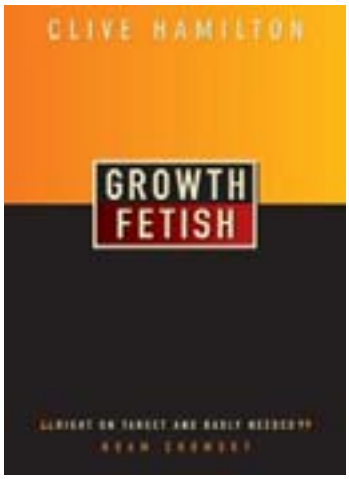
Something similar could be said in connection with Boersma's central thesis that, in this age at least, hospitality requires boundaries and that defending boundaries necessarily involves violence. "As long as we restrain violence as much as possible and only employ it in the interest of God's eschatological, undeconstructible justice, violence is a necessary and acceptable accompaniment both of God's and our practice of hospitality" (51). But is this what we see enacted in the Jesus story? When the disciples asked permission to call down fire on the inhospitable Samaritan village, Jesus refused. When Peter drew a sword to defend the boundaries of the messianic community, Jesus rebuked him. Certainly the call to discipleship entails sharp boundaries, and boundaries imply exclusion as well as inclusion. But exclusion can be self-chosen and boundaries need not be defended by lethal means. Also, in these days of religiously-sanctioned violence, it behoves us all to avoid statements that suggest human violence can ever serve "the interests of God's eschatological justice". That is precisely what religious terrorists believe as they prime their bombs and load their guns.

These disagreements with Boersma stem from our differing views on the appropriateness of Christians engaging in violence. Boersma subscribes to the just war theory; I do not. But there is also a deep agreement between us. We both know that, even if God's involvement in violence is impossible to avoid in the text of Scripture, violence does *not* belong to the inherent character of God. The Christian God is not a violent God but a God of peace, a God who overcomes violence through the blood of the cross, a God who one day will usher in the age of absolute and unconditional hospitality where no one shall learn war anymore. Come the day!

- Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Growth Fetish

Clive Hamilton, Allen & Unwin, 2003



It is rare that a book comes along that can be labelled truly prophetic. Not in the sense of forecasting the future but in the sense of an incisive social commentary that cuts through accepted cultural norms to proclaim timeless truth. It is even rarer that such a prophetic offering comes from the pen of an academic economist who is a professed atheist. Clive Hamilton's ***Growth Fetish*** is one such work.

In the style of a modern day Amos, Hamilton ruthlessly exposes the false foundation of our materialist, capitalist, consumerist society. The starting premise is that modern western society is obsessed with economic growth. That will come as no contentious issue for those who read mainstream media or follow modern election campaigns. The Howard government in Australia clings to office on its record of presiding over the longest period of economic growth in Australia's history. In the 1980s the world worshipped at the feet of the Japanese economic miracle. When that faltered in the 1990s the adulation shifted to the productivity miracle in the US. We measure our success as a nation by our national accounts.

Furthermore, as Hamilton points out, more economic growth is seen as the panacea for all ills. Whether it is unemployment, the environment or poverty, more growth is always the answer from both sides of

politics. The unquestionable desirability of economic growth is now axiomatic in all economics courses.

Economic growth is, of course, an increase in income and consumption. Hamilton's first task is to expose the falsehood that greater wealth actually makes us better off. While we Christians may well quote Jesus, "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15), Hamilton quotes numerous studies, both Australian and overseas, to make the same point. Greater wealth does not make people happier, at least not increases above a certain (lowish) income threshold. Ironically, Hamilton quotes research that demonstrates that religious belief and "a sense of meaning and purpose" are strongly associated with personal happiness, certainly a much stronger association than wealth.

Perhaps the chapter most embarrassing to Christians (in that we should be proclaiming this message louder that anyone else) is the chapter on identity. Hamilton discusses the relationship between personal identity, self-image, consumption and advertising. Rather than the economists' model of the consumer sovereignty, Hamilton highlights the fact that consumers are captive to the advertisers. Self worth is associated with brand image. No longer are we free beings made in the image of God; rather we become consumer clones made in the image of the corporate marketers. Furthermore, the advertisers constantly tell us that we are not content, that we need the latest goods in order to be happy. Tragically though, the same message continues regardless of what we just purchased. Whereas Paul was content in all circumstances (Phil 4:11), the growth society requires that we are never content.

Hamilton goes on to discuss progress, politics, work and the environment. In each case, our dissatisfaction derives from an endless chasing after increased wealth to the detriment of other life-enriching factors. Providing we continue to strive for economic growth, we will continue to have bland me-too politics, continue to destroy family life through over-work, and continue to destroy the natural environment.

If there is a weakness in Hamilton's work it is in his prescription for a post growth society. He proposes changes to taxation and other legislative changes to impose a lower growth, less consumerist society. The problem is, however, that this will not make people happier either. While Hamilton can point to a small number of voluntary downsizers and sea-changers, he is unable to point to a transforming power that can free people from the destructive stranglehold of greed. He has no theology of sin to account for the strength of its grip. Because that is really what this book is about. People are greedy and they are covetous. The solution is to be transformed by the new birth we have in Jesus Christ and the ongoing transforming power of the Holy Spirit working within and through a community of faith. Being a secular prophet however, Hamilton does not have these options available and therefore the book ends somewhat disappointingly for those hoping for a new way forward.

This is the book that should have been written by a Christian. It is a clear apologetic for a set of values championed by Jesus two thousand years ago. It is to our shame that it has application as much within the church as without. It is for our encouragement that Jesus' values make sense even to an atheist academic economist.

- Reviewed by John McKinnon. John and with his wife Sue lead a house church in Engadine, NSW which is part of the Ruach Neighbourhood Churches network.

Knitting

Anne Bartlett, Penguin, 2005

[EDITOR'S NOTE:

One of our AAANZ Mailings in May mentioned "knitting".

We received an email in response from Russell Bartlett that said, "My wife (Anne Bartlett) has had a novel recently published (titled ***Knitting***) by Penguin Australia, which has been well received."
Even before we could publish the following review, we heard from several AAANZ members that they were reading or have read the book and were recommending it to friends.

Anne Bartlett spent her childhood in the Adelaide Hills. While raising her four children, now grown, she worked as an editor, a ghost-writer, and a feature writer as well as knitting original creations for clothing designers. On commission from the Australian government, Bartlett recorded the life stories of three Aboriginal elders. She has recently published a children's book on Aboriginal history and culture and is currently finishing a Ph.D. in creative writing at the University of Adelaide. Anne lives with her husband, who has been a pastor for more than twenty years (a background she has drawn on for this book), in South Australia.]

Anne Bartlett's book ***Knitting*** is full of surprises. The local South Australian literary community was surprised (and relieved!) to see it knock Dan Brown's ***Da Vinci Code*** off the top of the bestseller list for two weeks running. I was surprised that a book titled ***Knitting*** with a photo of a ball of knitting yarn and a cup of coffee set against a pastel pink cover would appeal to blokes, too. In fact, I found myself so engaged with the story that I couldn't put it down on the bus ride into work. A few odd looks from other passengers couldn't dissuade me. The other surprise was that the author, an active Christian, had chosen to write a mainstream book, published by a very mainstream publisher. I was expecting a story about women and knitting that had little connection to Christian themes. I was wrong on all counts.

Knitting is not really about knitting at all – though for those familiar with the craft and its terminology they will notice that the author has done her homework. More than anything, ***Knitting*** is a book about relationships, about loss, and about healing.

The main characters in the novel constitute an unlikely trio. Martha, the expert and even compulsive knitter, is a homey woman. She is a battler with simple needs and concerns. She is kind-hearted and bright but

not highly educated and certainly not well off. Sandra, by contrast, appears to be everything Martha is not. A university lecturer in the history of textiles, Sandra is not lacking in resources and is self-confident to a fault, but struggling with the recent death of her husband. In just about every conceivable real-life scenario, Sandra and Martha would never cross paths – and if they did, each would likely take little notice of the other. Anne Bartlett brings these two very different characters convincingly together through a third main character – even more unlikely and broken than Martha and Sandra: a homeless man named Cliff.

These three characters from three different strata of society come together when Cliff suffers a seizure in Rundle Mall (the entire story is set in Adelaide). Martha alone stops to help, and eventually Sandra comes to their aid and uses her mobile to call an ambulance. From there the intertwining of these three lives becomes the central story.

Anne Bartlett's book is not full of sudden and unexpected twists. But at the same time, not everything is as it first appears. Cliff, who enters the story as the most needy of the three, is shown to be stronger and better adjusted than one might expect. Sandra and Martha, the in-control good Samaritans at the beginning of the novel, are increasingly forced to confront their own deep wounds and need for healing.

The characters are compelling and complex. Each chapter strips away another layer of protective veneer as we begin to discover who these people really are. The superb characterisation alone, for me, was worth the price of the book. The big unexpected bonuses are the spiritual themes and imagery that pervade the novel so thoroughly as to be unobtrusive, simply because they are always present – at least in the background.

While none of the characters (at least at the beginning of the narrative) could be considered overtly religious, several scenes actually take place in a church where Martha finds work as a cleaner and Sandra's friend Kate is an active member. The church also becomes the site chosen by Sandra for an exhibition of the recent history of knitting, featuring the work of Martha. It is in this same church that Sandra, visiting for the first time at the invitation of Kate, muses about the nature of prayer after noticing the prayer list in the bulletin. She realises that when her husband died she had probably also been among those 'wrapped in someone's prayer . . . *in absentia*.' And later in the book, one of the key extended scenes takes place during a Good Friday communion service!

It is refreshing to find an author not afraid to portray religious convictions, themes and worship settings as part of the ordinary stuff of life when these things either are excised from most recent novels completely, or are or brought into view in a negative manner only. I found the positive religious background settings sprinkled generously through the novel both bold and effective. But the religious imagery does not stop there. Later in the narrative, at a time when physical, emotional and spiritual healing are needed, a warm and compassionate character (the hospital cleaner) enters the lives of the main characters briefly, tenderly and anonymously. If he weren't so familiar to me, I may also have paid him little notice. The real turning point in the story, which is also the breakthrough that all the characters need to get past the various impasses of their lives, comes through their encounters (especially Martha's) with the cleaner – an unmistakable Christ figure.

For those in the Christian community who bemoan the absence of Christian imagery and themes in good mainstream writing, while cringing at the same time at the quality and content of some of what is being promoted as 'Christian fiction' I would strongly recommend a read of Anne Bartlett's ***Knitting*** – even if you happen to be a bloke!

- Mark Worthing, Dean of Theology, Tabor College, Adelaide

Post-Christendom:

Church and Mission in a Strange New World

Stuart Murray, Paternoster, 2004

The discussion about post-modernity and its implications for Christian mission has been running for some time now. There is still not a great deal of agreement, on what the implications of post-modernity are for the church and its mission, or for that matter, much sign of any fundamental changes in the life of church communities in response.

Then along comes Stuart Murray from the Anabaptist Network in the United Kingdom, with another large agenda item, under the forbidding label of "post-Christendom," that he drops squarely and unequivocally on the table. As Murray notes in his preface:

The shift from modernity to postmodernity (whatever this means) has received a huge amount of attention. The shift from Christendom to Post–Christendom is at least as significant for church and society but the issues and implications have not yet been explored to anything like the same extent. This book is an introduction, a journey into the past, an interpretation of the present, and an invitation to ask what following Jesus might mean in the strange new world of post-Christendom." (p.xvi)

We are at the end of Christendom Murray asserts, even though the final shape of that "after" is not yet clear and will not be for some time. Post-Christendom is defined by him, as *"…the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence."* (p.19)

But what was Christendom? Christendom is hard to define in simple terms and Murray perhaps wisely, never really attempts to provide such a definition. The author, however, provides us with a clear, well-told account of the circumstances of the emergence of Christendom, its achievements, disintegration, and its legacy. The case he develops is that Christendom can be characterised by the church's acceptance of imperial favour, status, wealth, power with the accompanying position of centrality in the social, cultural, and governmental life of a political community.

I am not aware of any account that tells the story of Christendom in such an accessible manner, with the focus of the story on the shape of the church and its mission in the world. Many previous accounts relevant to this theme have been written, by and for specialist academics in church history. The author has drawn on this academic literature and footnoted some of the key sources for those interested in following up on them.

Stuart Murray is interested in, and deeply concerned for, the mission of the church. He has a history of practical engagement in urban church planting in London, an experience that drove him to undertake his doctoral study of the early Anabaptists and then to return from teaching in a theological college to practical engagement in innovative approaches to church planting.

As he tells it here, the story of Christendom begins in fourth century Rome and deals with all the usual suspects from the time of the emperor Constantine onwards. While this story has been often told previously, Murray provides a helpful frame for assessing what happened, then and later with the use of the framework of 'believing', 'belonging' and 'behaving' to organise his account. He avoids a tone of sweeping judgement, preferring to frame questions for us to consider. What these questions point to is the recasting of the Christian story, reframing of Christian worship and life and the development of a supporting theology to bridge the increasing gap between Christendom and the teaching and ministry of Jesus and the practices of the early church.

What I found particularly helpful in the probing of these issues are the connections that Murray traces between the linking of the church with state power and the shape of its liturgy, theology and approach to mission. The influence of Christendom on liturgy and theology has been powerful, subtle and largely unquestioned. An audit of our theology and liturgical practices, including preaching, from this perspective will provide us with some clues about possible areas in which we may want to change the shape of church life and mission.

Murray focuses his discussion of Christendom and its decline within the context of Europe and the United Kingdom. He notes that the situation in the United States requires a complicated argument than he is not able to provide within the scope of this book. His account of the emergence of post-Christendom in Europe and the United Kingdom, suggested strongly to me that this is an account that is highly relevant to the Australian context. Murray's account has a good deal to offer us and is relevant in a way that approaches to mission drawing largely on the experience in the United States are not.

The author writes from a perspective that celebrates the end of Christendom and *"… the distorting influence of power, wealth and status on the Christian story. It grieves the violence, corruption, folly and arrogance of Christendom. It rejoices that all who choose to become followers of Jesus today do so freely without pressure or inducements. It revels in a context where the Christian story is becoming unknown and can be rediscovered …It anticipates new and liberating discoveries as Christians explore what it means to be a church on the margins that operates s a movement rather than an institution."* (p.21)

A note of celebration is perhaps not what we would expect. Regret, nostalgia and anger are more frequent characteristics of the rhetoric of Christian groups when they get round to thinking about the end of Christendom, even within Australia, often conflating and confusing the end of Christendom with the end of Christianity.

It is in the hopeful enthusiasm of this celebration that the theological and ecclesiological commitments of the author are given clear expression. Five hundred years after their being ground into quiet withdrawal to the margins of history and social engagement, the original vision and critique of the Anabaptists is coming into their own. So the author believes and so, I must confess, do I.

With the broad scope of the book sketched out, there are a couple of issues that I want to give particular attention.

The first issue relates to the profound change in the meaning of the cross. At the time of Jesus, the cross was an instrument of state execution, and a sign of disgrace and scandal. The cross was adopted by the Christian church, in subversion of the values of the empire, as a sign of the willingness of Christians to follow Jesus in suffering. In the development of Christendom, the cross was transformed into the symbol of the power and honour of a new empire that saw itself as Christian. By the time of the crusades to take up the cross implied not a readiness to die, but a readiness to kill.

The second issue concerns the marginalising of Jesus in the development of the creeds. Stuart Murray notes that Jesus' life between his birth and his death is absent from the creedal affirmations. Where are his miracles, teaching and subversive lifestyle and why are they not affirmed in the creeds? The other significant reality to note is the rhetorical structure of the creeds. They are phrased solely in terms of believing. **(See "Listening for the 'Silence' in the Creeds" p.11)**

The last three chapters of the book move from a consideration of Christendom and its legacy to begin the process of re-visioning the church and its mission. In closing Murray offers us in appendices a brief account of four groups of minority voices from the history of the church, the Donatists, the Waldensians, the Lollards and the Anabaptists.

The author is very clear that what he has to offer are a series of questions rather than definitive answers. While it is only a start, what he offers in these chapters is of great value in beginning the process of reflection on the direction in which we need to move in following Jesus into this strange new world. Further volumes in this series will pick up these issues in greater detail.

While substantial research has undoubtedly gone into the writing of this book, it is clear in its argument, relatively simple in its language and accessible in its presentation. It is a must read book for leadership at the denominational level and for local churches who are serious about beginning to re-engage in mission within Australian society. In most chapters, the author offers questions for discussion or summaries of his argument. This makes it highly suitable as a resource for Christian education programs in both church history and mission. Some of the checklists such as those relating to the

ecclesiastical and social vestiges of Christendom, while written with the British context in mind, could be easily adapted to the Australian context.

But what might evangelism, mission and the church really look like in a post-Christendom context such as that in Australia? For those who want to engage their imagination in thinking about what this, I want to draw your attention to the central story in Tim Winton's ***The Turning*** (Picador 2004).

I was reading ***The Turning*** at the same time as I was finishing up re-reading Stuart Murray's book for the purposes of this review. It struck me despite my absorption in Winton's storytelling that in one of the stories in the centre of the book, Winton had provided a wonderful account of the sort of witness and evangelism in a post-Christendom Australian context that Murray had been advocating.

I won't say much about the story itself lest I take away from its power and impact. The institutional church is nowhere in view. There are no crusades, church evangelism programs or affirmations of creedal orthodoxy within sight. What we have is the story of a "turning", a conversion if you like, which is brought about by a developing friendship, as the context for the discovery of the story of Jesus and his deep attractiveness, by a woman in a coastal caravan park who is living through the experience of appalling domestic violence.

In his powerful, confronting account of the life of a powerless victimised person recovering her identity and agency, Winton is convincing in his account of the discovery of faith and freedom in a context of violence and oppression. The instruments of the woman's discovery are themselves flawed, a couple struggling with the impact of alcoholism on their relationship. The messengers are vulnerable and broken and in the end can only point toward Jesus. The apostle Paul would have clearly understood what was going on here.

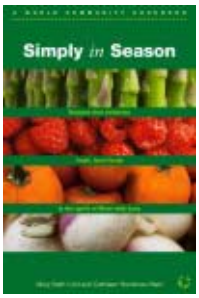
The example of mission that Winton has incidentally provided for us in "The Turning" which forms the centrepiece of his book connects deeply with the closing paragraph of Murray's book.

Disavowing Christendom and discovering mission strategies and ways of being church in post-Christendom, though important are secondary to recovering the centrality of Jesus. The future of the church in Western culture – possibly even Western culture itself – may depend upon a fresh encounter with Jesus. An encounter with his teaching that inspires creative and counter-cultural living, an encounter with the meaning of his death and resurrection that unmasks the powers and gives hope for a different world and an encounter with his Spirit that empowers and energises hopeful discipleship. It would be strange, however, if this encounter did not take place on the margins of church and society, since that is where Jesus is so often found. It is there that he invites us to discover him and follow him in post-Christendom. (p.317)

Amen!

- Reviewed by Doug Hynd. This article is used with permission of the editor of *Zadok* where it will also appear.

Simply in Season:
Recipes that celebrate fresh, local foods in the spirit of *More-with-Less*
Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert



Not so long ago most fresh food on North American tables came from home gardens and local farmers markets. Today the average item of food travels more than a thousand miles before it lands on U.S. tables. It's a remarkable technological accomplishment, but has not proven to be healthy for our communities, our land, or us.

Through stories and simple "whole foods" recipes, Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert explore how the food we put on our tables impacts our local and global neighbours. They show the importance of eating local, seasonal food—and fairly traded food—and invite readers to make choices that offer security and health for our communities, for the land, for body, and spirit.

Simply in Season offers a starting point encouraging you to feed both your body and spirit with nutritious food and challenging ideas about the world around you. Woven throughout the recipe pages of each season are writings, tidbits of information to reflect upon while the onions sauté, the soup boils, or the bread bakes.

"This cookbook reflects . . . a commitment to eat what is fresh and best in season. Here you will read about how real people grow and use the natural bounty of the lands they call home. Enjoy the flavours and gifts of this book." —From the Foreword by Graham Kerr (The Galloping Gourmet)

Simply in Season is the third cookbook in the World Community Cookbook Series. The two previous cookbooks, **More-with-Less** and **Extending the Table** each offer unique recipes and writings to assist readers in raising awareness about world food issues and the interconnectedness of our global community.

Mary Beth Lind of West Virginia, is a registered dietician and nutritional consultant. She and her husband, Larry, are market gardeners in West Virginia. Cathleen Hockman-Wert of Oregon, has served as editor for Mennonite Women USA since 1997. In that role, she founded **Timbrel**, a magazine by Mennonite women in Canada and the United States. Lind and Hockman-Wert spent nearly two years gathering more than 1,600 recipes from some 450 contributors across Canada and the United States.

In order to raise children who can withstand the allures of materialistic consumerism, we need the support of the whole community. If Christian parents band together, they will be more able to help their children resist the peer pressure and... the bombardment of media advertising that fosters greed...

- Marva Dawn, ***Is It a Lost Cause?*** p. 149-151

Waging Nonviolent Struggle

Twentieth Century Practice and Twenty-First Century Potential

Gene Sharp, Extending Horizons Books, 2005

This groundbreaking new work builds on fifty years of Gene Sharp's academic research and practical experience aiding nonviolent struggles around the world. It provides unprecedented information about how to strategically plan nonviolent action and make it more effective. Furthermore, it includes twenty-three case accounts of nonviolent struggle in the twentieth century.

orders@portersargent.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Alan and Eleanor Kreider are visiting Melbourne and Sydney this July.

A special AAANZ evening is being planned for **Melbourne** on **7 July at Truth and Liberation Concern Coffee Shop, 265 Canterbury Road Bayswater 7.30pm**. The topic will be "Praying in the Anabaptist Tradition," exploring both the historical scene and what Mennonites/ Anabaptists in North America are doing today.

In **Sydney**, AAANZ and Macquarie Christian Studies Institute (MCSI) are co-sponsoring a day with the Kreiders **Saturday, 16 July, 10am-4pm, Trinity Chapel Macquarie, Robert Menzies College**, Cost $60 and $40 concession. The topic will be "Worship, Mission, and Peace After Christendom."

The Kreiders will also be speaking **Wednesday, 20 July, 7.30, Trinity Chapel Macquarie, Robert Menzies College**, Cost $30 and $20 concession. Their topic will be "Is there life after Christendom? The relevance of the Early Church in a post-Christian world." Email: **integrating@mcsi.edu.au**

Limitless sea of love

(with thanks to St. John of the Cross...Sayings p. 34)

The world is an infinite sea of love
our souls the boats thereon
the sails the patterns of our lives
and the wind is God's freely given grace
which moves us to unexplored horizons beyond

The grace that blows so rich and free
propels our craft on wildest spree
of enterprise rich and bold
at the end of life's journey with setting sun
life's pilgrimages round the fire are told

The rocks and the shoals
in seas close in to shore
spell danger if we harbour there
for our vessels were made for deep water of love
not passionless portage with whores

God formed our bows with his own hand
our mast the cross he bore
full rigging a gift of Spirit's presence
provisioned for journey within our core
to weather storm far from the land

When life's currents threaten
to wash you ashore
and reef take your keel apart
remember God's world wide ocean of love
though forlorn keep the tiller turned east toward sunrise
for sailing...that's your part

- Jon Rudy, MCC Asia Peace Resource

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

AAANZ
c/o Mark and Mary Hurst
P.O.Box 367 Sutherland NSW 1499
Australia
02 9545 0301
AAANZ@iprimus.com.au

AAANZ Homepage on the internet
http://www.anabaptist.asn.au