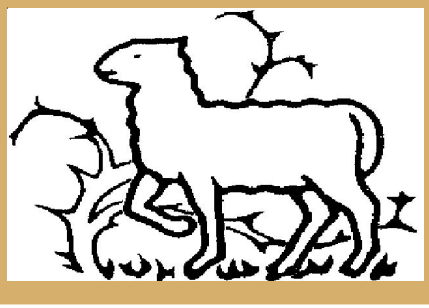

ON THE ROAD

Journal of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

DOUG SEWELL

About The Way Ahead

At the Pinjarra AAANZ Conference in Western Australia in January I set four objectives for this year; to **TALK, EXPLAIN, GROW & PARTNER**

We have seen some remarkable progress despite the challenges of fostering a network across such a vast far-flung geography. Both Australia and New Zealand suffer a tyranny of distance that engenders isolation. A network can forge connections between individuals but also suffers from an inherent weakness in its inability to link up people in real relationships. Visiting professors Ray Gingerich and Vernon Jantzi both identified the disconnection felt by many they spoke with during their travels. Local churches often fail to provide identity and relevance. A network can stimulate and encourage new ways for communities to grow by the sharing of our individual journeys. Connectedness begins when we talk and listen to one another's stories.

TALK: The recent teleconference for members was an example of how people across Australia and New Zealand could link up. A highlight of the discussions was a stimulating informal chat given by Dr Chris Marshall. In 2008 we plan to network by phone more often with guest speakers from around the world. This will be an exciting opportunity exclusive to AAANZ members to become part of a wider global movement. Membership in AAANZ will offer ways to become better connected.

EXPLAIN: The Anabaptist story is powerful and provocative and can inspire people to action. The story is no less than the whole message of Jesus, Community and Reconciliation. The story if properly explained has the power to transform lives. This year we have circulated a new brochure that explains a little of that story. The Encounter program called The Anabaptist Vision

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:

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on ABC National Radio broadcast facets of the story to a national audience.

GROW: I asked every member this year to invite one new person to join. We have seen positive growth particularly in New Zealand. I would like to see us strengthen these new links and continue to grow.

PARTNER: We have chosen to work alongside other groups. The new connections have seen us team up with the Sydney Network, the Canberra based School of Discipleship and the Christian Peacemaker Teams. This has been healthy and enabled us to share, learn and be encouraged. A couple of our members will attend the Historic Peace Churches - Asia Peace Conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in December. Urban Seed and Oikos a friendship ministry towards the home church movement will jointly host the AAANZ Melbourne Conference in January 2009. We are looking to partner even more.

There are challenges in the way ahead. I see our objectives for 2008 as;
OWNERSHIP, FOCUS & MATURITY

OWNERSHIP: To enable a movement every individual needs to make the network their own. A network functions best as a diverse interactive web rather than as an organisation with spokes that radiate around a centralised hub. Everyone then becomes central.

FOCUS: There is so much that can be done. And there is a temptation to try and do too much. Our objectives therefore have to be clear and achievable. The new executive made up of members from around Australia and New Zealand will be gathering at Bundeena in Sydney in February 2008 to set our objectives. We will keep you posted.

MATURITY: Vital to the future sustainability of AAANZ is our ability to mature and stand on our own feet. We need to more than double our local income in the next year. This means many more sharing the load. Mark and Mary Hurst return at the end of December 2007 and a new home base for AAANZ is being established in Sydney. The opportunities are great and so is the challenge to forge a strong and positive influence on the life and future of the church. I welcome your part in making this come to be.

THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

MARK AND MARY HURST

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

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, *for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.* - Ephesians 4:11-13

When we speak in churches about our work with AAANZ we often use the verses above to explain our role as pastoral workers – "to equip the saints for the work of ministry." It is not our role to do all the work of the Association but "to equip" others in the ministry God has given them. The overall goal according to this passage is that we all grow up to be like Christ.

One definition of "equip" is "provide with (something) usually for a specific purpose." In equipping people in AAANZ we do a number of things like edit this journal and the weekly AAANZ Mailing. We answer questions from people about Anabaptism and related topics like discipleship, peace, and justice. We connect people with others in their area who may be travelling a similar spiritual road. And we teach in a number of settings. All of this we do to equip others for ministry.

The word "equip" is related to "enable" – to render capable or able for some task. Mark is fascinated with words and sometimes a word will jump out and grab his attention; like yesterday while listening to a programme on the radio. A U.S. Army Colonel was being interviewed about what is

happening in Anbar Province in Iraq. He mentioned "enablers." Mark thought "Enablers – that is what we are. We enable others to do what needs to be done."

The question Mark had was, "How is the military using this term?" For the Colonel, enablers are U.S. forces helping set up FOBs (forward operating bases). They are forward air controllers and artillery used to pave the way for the army. The military has its own use of language (as does the church). The interview continued with phrases like "a Spartacus moment" where a local Iraqi sheik "stood up" (President Bush says "We'll stand down when the Iraqis stand up") and a question from a caller about training Sunni police officers - "By supporting past enemies are we supporting future enemies?" Why not befriend them and end the enemy cycle?

The military uses enabler in the sense of making something operational, like "enable a nuclear warhead." Enablers help the military accomplish their goals. But more often *enabler* "is associated with people who allow loved ones to behave in ways that are destructive. For example, an enabler wife of an alcoholic might continue to provide the husband with alcohol. A person might be an enabler of a gambler or compulsive spender by lending them money to get out of debt. In this fashion, though the enabler may be acting out of love and trying to help or protect a person, he or she is actually making a chronic problem like an addiction worse. By continuing to lend money to the gambler, for example, the gambler doesn't have to face the consequences of his actions; someone is there to bail him out of trouble and continue to enable his behaviour" (http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-an-enabler.htm). This behaviour sets up a co-dependency relationship.

Language from the field of treating addictions like alcoholism and gambling is enlightening when applied to the military and what it is doing in Iraq. What are being *enabled* are the cycle of violence and the enemy cycle. The military needs past enemies to become future enemies so the cycles keep going. Peacemaking is needed to break the cycles and enable new relationships that are healthy and whole.

After this foray into the language of *enablers* we think we will stay with the Ephesians goal *to equip the saints for the work of ministry*. May God bless each of you as you minister God's grace and peace where God has placed you.

AANZ Member Opens the Desmond Tutu Education Centre

Victoria University Associate Professor Chris Marshall (Religious Studies) was invited to deliver the opening plenary address at a conference marking the inauguration of the Desmond Tutu Education Centre in New York City. The conference, entitled "Reconciliation at the Round Table", was timed to coincide with the sixth anniversary of 9/11. In his address, Chris spoke on the challenges of working for reconciliation in the context of the rising tide of religiously-justified violence, terrorism and counter-terrorism. The conference was attended by over 300 people from all over the US and overseas.

The Desmond Tutu Education Centre is a conference facility that will, among other things, host conferences and research seminars on reconciliation. It is located at the General Theological Seminary in Manhattan, the oldest Episcopal seminary in North America, founded in 1817. Archbishop Tutu was on sabbatical leave at this institution when he learned that he had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

The Archbishop himself delivered the second plenary address at the conference. He spoke on the theme "without forgiveness there is no future". This is also the title of a book he wrote about his experiences as chairman of South Africa's historic Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the early post-

apartheid era. The third plenary address was given by the Most Rev. Dr Katharine Jefferts Schori, the Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church of America. She spoke on the continuing importance of working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, aimed at eliminating extreme poverty.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Community of the Cross of Nails, a worldwide network of reconciliation communities birthed in the vision of those who sought reconciliation rather than retribution in the wake of the bombing of Coventry Cathedral in World War II.

Following the conference, Chris participated in a seminar with students at the seminary, where his book on restorative justice, ***Beyond Retribution***, is used as a basic text. He also served as Visiting Theologian at Grace Episcopal Church on Broadway, where he conducted a day-long retreat on reconciliation. Grace is a landmark historic site in New York, the oldest Gothic building in the country. The church was actively involved in providing assistance to people fleeing from the Twin Towers catastrophe on 9/11.

"It was an honour to be invited to speak at the conference", Chris says, "and a delight to see Desmond Tutu in the flesh. Along with people like Dr Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, Tutu is one of the greatest modern examples of the capacity of the human spirit to rise above revenge to display generosity and magnanimity towards former foes and oppressors. The courage, compassion and humility that Tutu displayed is truly inspiring, and proves that reconciliation really is possible in the world, even in situations of severe violence and brutality".

Escaping "Religion" - with the help of the Blues

Doug Hynd

Christians engaged in conversation about their faith are often confronted with the assertion that "I'm religious but I don't go to church". The next time it happens to me I have decided that I am going to say "How interesting. I'm a follower of Jesus but I'm not interested in being religious."

Beyond the shock value of giving an unexpected response is my deep conviction that being a Christian really has nothing to do with being "religious". The unthinking identification of being a Christian with "being religious" drastically distorts both our understanding, and our practice, of being a disciple of Jesus. Unfortunately the connection in both the church and the public mind between being a Christian and being "religious" is so close that it is going to take a good deal of effort to even begin to disentangle the two.

Let me try and start the disentangling by posing some questions. Why do we as Christians care about being "religious" and think that being "religious" is an area of common ground rather than difference? Why have we accepted the confinement of the Christian faith within the sphere of the "religious"? Or, to put it more controversially, why do we think that the appeal to an interiorised, disembodied and individualised faith is adequate as an account of the Gospel vision of what God was up to in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

Our uncritical acceptance of this confinement and the limitation of the power of the gospel to a "religious", private dimension of our lives has had devastating consequences. It has left the Christian community complicit in, the destruction of human lives, their livelihood, their communities and the created order by unfettered state violence across the globe over the past few centuries.

The story about the separation of "religion" and politics in Europe as it is usually told is that the wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants were the reason for the development of the "secular" state. A state free from "religious" control was necessary to ensure tolerance and suppress the violence of competing religious forces. This story gains its substantial plausibility

against the background of the co-option of the Christian church by the Roman Empire, the subsequent emergence of Christendom and the justification by theologians and church leaders of the use of imperial violence to enforce conversion to the Christian faith.

Emerging from some recent scholarship about the wars of religion however, is a substantially different account from the story we summarised above about the emergence of a secular society and the confinement of "religion" to the realm of individual choice.

William Cavanaugh has strongly challenged the commonly accepted story about the "wars of religion" and has retold it as the story of the invention of religion as a sphere of life disconnected from our public, community and social life. In "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House – The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State" (***Modern Theology***, 1995), the story is not about wars arising from the inability of differing "religions" to live with one another. The story is rather about the emergence of the state as "sovereign", with a total monopoly of power within a limited geographic area, and its drive to eliminate all possible rivals and limitations of its authority.

> *The "Wars of Religion" were not the events which necessitated the birth of the modern State; they were in fact themselves the birthpangs of the State. These wars were not simply a matter of conflict between "Protestantism" and "Catholicism," but were fought largely for the aggrandizement of the emerging State over the decaying remnants of the medieval ecclesial order. …. to call these conflicts "Wars of Religion" is an anachronism, for what was at issue in these wars was the very creation of religion as a set of privately held beliefs without direct political relevance. The creation of religion was necessitated by the new State's need to secure absolute sovereignty over its subects.* (p.398).

The story on this telling is very different from "what everybody knows". We could not have had "wars of religion" according to Cavanaugh, because "religion" in the way we understand it did not exist at that time. Instead, "religion" was carved out during this time as a separate dimension of life, an internal belief system, detached from any significant bodily expression as a consequence of, and essential element in the emergence of the modern state. "Religion" and politics were carved out as separate spheres of life as an essential element of the concentration of power in the hands the state.

> *What is at issue behind these wars is the creation of "religion" as a set of beliefs which is defined as personal conviction and which can exist separately from one's public loyalty to the State. The creation of religion, and thus the privatization of the Church, is correlative to the rise of the State* (p.403)

The church, along with all the other sources of authority and power in medieval society, was brought within the scope of the state's control. The results were far reaching.

> *The concept of religion being born here is one of domesticated belief systems which are, insofar as it is possible, to be manipulated by the sovereign for the benefit of the State. Religion is no longer a matter of certain bodily practices within the Body of Christ, but is limited to the realm of the "soul," and the body is handed over to the State*(p.405).

Paul's Epistle to the Romans, addressed to Christians at the heart of the then imperial power, comes immediately to mind. According to Paul our bodies are to be "a living sacrifice" to the Messiah Jesus, No other authority can claim that degree of authority over our bodies.

Handing over of the control of our bodies to the uncontested power of the state was to surrender ourselves to unthinking participation in violence generated in pursuit of the survival of the nation state. The death toll of those whose lives have been offered up on the altar of nationalism, in the cause of the survival of the state, has been appalling, beyond our imagination in the period since the sixteenth century. The (relative) silence of Christians in failing to name this reality for what it is, to tell the truth about this has been and remains a scandal that hangs over our claim to be followers of Jesus "who came preaching peace."

> *… the term "religion" has accompanied the domestication of Christianity. It has facilitated the marginalisation of the radical claims of the gospel and the transfer of the Christian's ultimate loyalty to the supposedly rational*

> *spheres of nation and the market. The church is now a leisure activity: the state and the market are the only things worth dying for. The modern concept of religion facilitates idolatry, the replacement of the living God with Caesar and Mammon.* (William Cavanaugh, "God is not Religious" in ***God is Not…*** edited by D Brent Laytham, Brazos Press, 2004, p.112)

To question the identification of Christian discipleship with religion is to open up from a very different angle the question of a non-religious Christianity raised by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his famous ***Letters and Papers from Prison***. Bonhoeffer was not, as assumed by liberal theologians of the 1960's, arguing for the reduction of Christian orthodoxy to the best insights of modernity. In a recent sermon Thorwald Lorenzen summed up recent Bonhoeffer scholarship around this issue.

> *Bonhoeffer rejects two alternatives. There is the sectarian alternative that Christians tend to withdraw from the world. Let the world be the world. The church which is often portrayed as a ship would then stay in the safe harbour and never brave the storms of life. And then there is the liberal alternative where Christians and the church so identify with the ways of the world that the impression is given that the world does not need the Gospel and that people must not be challenges with the option of faith in Christ.* (Remembering a modern Saint and Martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer: February 4, 1906 - April 9, 1945)

Bonhoeffer, if he did not diagnose the issue of "religion" in quite the terms of Cavanaugh, was I would argue trying to say something similar in his cryptic account from prison of a "non-religious" Christianity. In Bonhoeffer's account, "religion" tends to separate reality into holy and profane, sacred and secular. Reality, however, as Bonhoeffer understand it, cannot be divided into two spheres. In Jesus Christ these two spheres have become fused to constitute one reality in and through Jesus Christ. Reality is therefore one and our life as Christians should express that unity.

How can we find our way out of the confinement of faith and discipleship within the sphere of "religion"? Habits ingrained in our language and habits of thought as powerfully as the identification of Christian discipleship with "religion" are difficult to break. To name and to diagnose the issue as I have tried to do is only a minor step forward. The weight of popular theology and the assumptions embedded in the language of most sermons reproduce the confinement. Some of our liturgical practices, such as the sharing of our common meal, dying to the powers of this world in baptism, and economic sharing through the offering speak against the limitation of Christian faith to the sphere of religion. Much of our gathered worship stands as a mute, unarticulated witness to the oneness of a "non-religious" life to which we are called by Jesus. There are some helpful resources available to assist us in the work that needs to be done along this line. John Howard Yoder's ***Body Politics*** comes immediately to mind, along with the work sponsored by the Ekklesia Project (www.ekklesiaproject.org).

"Some of our liturgical practices, such as the sharing of our common meal, dying to the powers of this world in baptism, and economic sharing through the offering speak against the limitation of Christian faith to the sphere of religion."

Another way forward is to crack open our imagination to the possibility of a discipleship beyond the limits of "religion". We have the resources given in the work of musicians such as U2 and Bruce Cockburn over the last decades expressing a world engaging faith that subverts the secular sacred divide. If these seem too elite in their style and intellectual in their lyrics for your taste, why not start with listening to the blues as a way of reshaping our vision? I glimpsed this possibility recently when on successive evenings I attended an overflow lecture at St Mark's on the legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and a concert by the American blues guitarist and vocalist Eric Bibb.

There is an interesting and suggestive link between the blues and the life and witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The turning point of his life from being "a theologian" to being a "Christian" seems to be located during a time when he was

participating in the life of the black Christian church in New York. The Negro spirituals became part of the gift that he brought to his students in the illegal seminaries of the Confessing Church.

In the blues there is an embodied and earthy quality that subverts where it does not dissolve the line between the "religious" and the secular". There is a quality of "spirit" in the songs about love, work, oppression and an earthed and embodied quality in the songs of discipleship and faith.

The concert in Canberra by the American blues guitarist, singer, songwriter Eric Bibb, embodied for me in the music, the lyrics and the performance this undivided approach to life. After nearly two hours of songs of love, faithfulness and struggle unobtrusively the music changed slightly in focus, though not in their style and character. The closing bracket of songs began with a call to prayer, "The Needed Time", an acknowledgment of dependence and connection, an invocation to Jesus to "come by here", even if "you don't stay long". And come by here "he" clearly did as those present in Tilley's Bar and Restaurant unwillingly came towards the end of an evening of music of engaging performance and moral presence. Perhaps better expressed, the presence of Jesus was explicitly named for the first time, though "he" had been there all the time.

The final song, a traditional blues number, with its powerful evocation "I want Jesus to walk with me", had the sophisticated religiously indifferent audience attentive in a focussed, almost longing silence as the plea went out modulated through the blues melody and the lyrics, lyrics that registered the pain, and loneliness of the human journey in its echo around the café.

I want Jesus to walk with me
I want Jesus to walk with me
All along life's pilgrim journey
I want Jesus to walk with me…
When my heart is almost breaking
I want Jesus to walk with me

Here was the penetrating call of a wholehearted faith. The autonomous consumer and self reliant, rational individual of market capitalism was nowhere in view. "Religion" as an experience disconnected from the reality of human life, joy and pain, faithfulness in relationship and the call to struggle for justice was not what this was all about. Bodily life as a gift, to be lived in the journey with the "truly Human One" expressed powerfully and truthfully in the performance, gave a new vision of what my commitment to living a wholehearted "non-religious" discipleship could be.

[For a taste of Eric Bibb in concert go to: http://www.folkalley.com/music/livefrom/eric_bibb/].

What's it got to do with me?

Christians and climate change

John McKinnon

Perhaps it was Al Gore's film, perhaps it was the drought, said by some to be the worst for 1000 years, perhaps just the accumulated nagging of environmentalists. Whatever the catalyst, climate change is now headline material, with an increasing number of Australians, from the Prime Minister down, accepting both its existence and the need to do something about it. In the face of this prominence, Christians face an important question: is this a distraction from our true mission; or is it an issue we need to embrace as an integral part of the work God has called us to?

At least in living memory, Christianity and environmentalism have rarely been mentioned together positively in the same sentence. In 1967 American Professor Lynn White famously wrote "The historical roots of our ecological crisis"[1]. This article, published in the journal ***Science***, accused Christianity of providing the doctrinal and moral foundation for environmental exploitation and degradation. For White, Christianity in its

western form was very human-centred: creation was to serve humankind; humankind was given a mandate to rule over earth, humans were distinct from the rest of creation through being made in God's image.

At least as an historical analysis, White's thesis has at least a ring of truth to it. Western Christianity has synthesized with Platonic dualism and viewed the material world as less valuable that the "greater" spiritual reality and to be exploited for the purposes of humankind. Physical bodies were deemed less important than our eternal souls. James Watt, US Secretary of the Interior in the Reagan government, expressed the popular belief when he wrote that the earth is "merely a temporary way station on the road to eternal life… The earth was put here by the Lord for His people to subdue and use for profitable purposes on their way to the hereafter."[2]

However, as Biblical analysis, it falls far short of truth. Rather than viewing the physical creation as being available for use and abuse by humans destined to be saved out of this world, the Bible presents the whole creation as a demonstration of God's glory, to be cared for and nurtured, and as eagerly awaiting its own renewal under the Lordship of Christ. Furthermore, simple obedience to Jesus' command to love our neighbours implies at the very least that we care enough for our world to be able to share its resources with others, not just in this generation but with the generations to come. In this sense, environmental issues go the heart of God's demand for justice.

Creation

Right back in the very first chapter of the Bible we have it recorded that "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good". Psalms like 8, 19 and 104 speak of God's glory being displayed by the heavens and the earth. God's dramatic reply to Job in chapters 38-41 demonstrates emphatically how the creation reveals God's existence, power and character. In Romans 1:20, Paul says this "natural revelation" reflects God's glory to such an extent that no person can use an excuse of ignorance about God to defend their sin. God made the world and it was very good. As Francis Schaeffer says, "What God has made, I, who am also a creature, must not despise".[3]

Perhaps the most remarkable element of creation is the man Jesus Christ. God the creator becomes Jesus, the creature. In the incarnation, in which God assumes a physical human body and lives in his physical creation, we see a remarkable validation of God's physical creation. Furthermore, Jesus' resurrection body was also physical. Paul is adamant that our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's; real physical bodies, albeit transformed from our current state.

In fact, when Jesus returns, all creation will be renewed. Romans 8:20-22 speaks of creation awaiting its liberation. "These words of Paul point not to the annihilation of the present material universe on the day of revelation, to be replaced by a universe entirely new, but to a transformation of the present universe so that it will fulfil the purpose for which God created it."[4]

Paul refers to this renewal in his other letters. Ephesians 1:10 speaks of all things being brought together under Christ. Colossians 1:20 tells us that all things, on earth and in heaven will be reconciled through Christ. This will be a fulfillment of what the prophets have foretold. Isaiah 11 anticipates a messianic kingdom with not just peace and justice between men and God but also a kingdom of environmental harmony. This is echoed in the wonderful picture of the renewed creation in Isaiah 65:17-25. God has not abandoned creation to decay or destruction but through Christ has planned for its renewal. It is worth noting that after Noah's flood God makes a covenant not just with Noah and his family but with every living created thing (Gen. 9:9-11). The incarnation and the resurrection point to a future kingdom in which all creation is renewed. Christ's resurrection is our assurance of this promise of renewal. The entire physical creation is part of God's plan.

The inherent goodness of creation as well as its final destiny of renewal repudiate any platonic dualism which seeks to distinguish between the value of the material creation and the "greater" spiritual reality. Rather, the Bible stresses the unity and value of the entire created order because God made it all and will be Lord over all.

Just as Paul in Romans 6 raises the question as to whether justification by faith means we can proceed with a life of sin, it may still be argued that God's eventual renewal of

creation gives us all the more reason to exploit it now. However, Paul's answer from Romans 6 applies in this case too. We Christians have been called to live in the new order of God's Kingdom and to demonstrate its values and presence in the world even though its consummation awaits Jesus' return. As well as demonstrating this Kingdom reality in our personal morality and our human relationships, we must demonstrate the reality of God's Kingdom in our treatment of his creation. Just as we anticipate the fullness of the Kingdom in our relationships and pursuit of justice, we anticipate it in our work towards the healing of the environment.

Paul's reasons, given the Corinthians, as to why they should refrain from prostitution and sexual immorality are precisely because the physical body is destined for resurrection (1 Cor. 6:14). This continuity between the present physical body and the future resurrection body means that what Christians do with their bodies' matters. Similarly, the continuity between the present physical creation and the renewed creation that will be manifest upon Christ's return means that how we treat creation matters.

Rather than viewing the physical creation as being available for use and abuse by humans destined to be saved out of this world, the Bible presents the whole creation as a demonstration of God's glory, to be cared for and nurtured.

In fact, Paul's advice to the Corinthians in the light of his discourse on the resurrection is to "devote yourselves fully to the work of the Lord". Why? "Because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58). For Paul and Jesus, labour in the Lord was to bring about His Kingdom. As we have seen above, this involves Jesus being Lord of all creation. We are to work towards Jesus' Lordship over all creation. The continuity between the present physical world and the new creation means that our work will not be wasted but, appropriately transformed, will be celebrated and included in the renewed earth.

So what about those passages speaking of human dominion? Genesis 1:28, for example, speaks of subduing the earth and ruling over all creatures. Francis Schaeffer reminds us that although we may have dominion, creation still belongs to God [5]. We are never more than stewards, charged with using God's resources to His glory, to serve others and according to his character of love of justice. Use of this dominion for selfish purposes is a result of the fall, not God's intention.

So creation is good, reflective of God's glory, instructive of God's character and power and is destined for renewal as part of God's all-encompassing kingdom. As subjects of that Kingdom, we serve our King and anticipate his future rule by not only caring for his creation but working towards its healing.

Justice

A fundamental aspect of God's self revelation in the Pentateuch is that he is a God who "defends the cause of the fatherless and widow" (Deut 10:18 for example). In fact, justice for the poor is a constant theme throughout the Old Testament, not just isolated to celebrated passages such as Isaiah 58, Amos 5 or Micah 6:8. On the verge of entering the promised land, the Israelites are told that the land is sufficient in resources and that "there should be no poor among you" (Deut 15:4). However, in an acknowledgement of human falleness, Moses adds, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded ... towards the poor and needy in your land" (Deut. 15:11). Sharing the world's resources to alleviate poverty is no optional extra but a fundamental outworking of God's character.

It is a sad fact that the impact of environmental degradation falls most heavily on the poor. It is the poor who live in the most vulnerable places, it is the poor who farm the least fertile land, it is the poor who occupy the most polluted land, and it is the poor who are forced through their poverty to further degrade the land on which they live. George Browning, Anglican bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, recently wrote, "It is always the case that a degraded environment makes poor people poorer and in that environment, with fewer choices, poor people are likely to contribute to the further denuding of their environment."[6]

Climate change in particular is forecast to have a significant negative impact on poverty and

make the poverty eradication process more difficult. According to the United Nations Development Program, "Developing countries, and the poorest people who live in them, are the most vulnerable to climate change."[7] The British Department for International Development suggests that the impact on the world's poorest citizens will come through lower overall economic growth, a direct effect on poor people's livelihood and assets, decreased food and water security, increases in incidence of diseases such as malaria and TB, and the increasing risk of shock events to which these most vulnerable people will be exposed.[8]

For obvious reasons environmental degradation and climate change are not explicitly addressed in the Bible. Being largely products of industrial society, these issues simply did not exist in those times. However, there are several elements in the Levitical law that point to the fact that God intended his people to demonstrate justice by sharing, caring for and preserving natural resources. Leviticus 19:9 states the well known "gleaning" law. Harvesters were to not to scour their fields a second time to collect every last scrap of the harvest and the edges of fields were to be left for the poor. The land was to provide for people's needs, not for their greed. Verse 19 of the same chapter has prohibitions against cross-breeding animals and planting mixed crops. The practical purpose of these and other obscure laws may be difficult to discern from the chronological and cultural distance of the 21st century. However, it is possible they relate to environmental care and sustainable agricultural practice. Similarly, the four year period allowed fruit trees before harvest described in verse 25 may relate to ritual purity or may again relate to sustainable agricultural practice.

A more obvious law promoting sustainability is found in Leviticus 25:1-7. The land itself is to be rested every 7th year. Natural resources were not to be ruthlessly exploited for humankind's benefit. Rather, they were to be given opportunity to replenish and revitalize in the same way people were to regularly stop their labour for a Sabbath rest.

The Year of Jubilee, described in rest of Leviticus 25 takes this principle much further. The 50 year redistribution of land demonstrates that property ownership is not absolute; that ownership of natural resources is merely a temporary stewardship. The implication of this stewardship model of ownership is that resources must be managed in such a way that they remain available and useful to future "owners". Natural resources cannot be exploited for the benefit of a select group of the current generation. Rather, they must be acknowledged as belonging to God, and as such, available to benefit all of this, and future, generations.

God's justice demands that we act to prevent climate change causing yet more oppression of those already suffering under heavy burdens of poverty and marginalisation.

God's justice demands that the poor and most vulnerable be cared for. It demands that the world's resources are shared among all people and that we live sustainably so future generations can also share in the world's resources. In particular, God's justice demands that we act to prevent climate change causing yet more oppression of those already suffering under heavy burdens of poverty and marginalisation.

Climate Change

Climate change is the major environmental issue of our day. It threatens the lives of millions of the world's poorest people who are living in low lying areas and are most vulnerable to increasingly severe weather and changing rainfall patterns. In Bangladesh, ranked 139 out of 177 on the Human Development Index (HDI), a one metre rise in sea level (near the upper end of estimates for this century) would inundate 18% of the land, displacing 11% of the population with flow on effects affecting 60% of the population. An OECD report simply states: "At present, Bangladesh is too poor to be able to adapt to such a rise in sea level."[9] Similarly, Ethiopia, ranked 170 of 177 countries on the HDI, is facing increased desertification, droughts and malaria incidence.

This warming of the earth's surface through greenhouse gas pollution equates to despising God's good creation, robbing future generations of access to the natural resources God has provided and causing further hardship to the world's poorest people. Those of us in wealthy nations,

through our continued consumption of electricity produced by fossil fuels, through our polluting transportation, through our continued land clearing and meat consumption, are causing this problem. While as individuals we may be somewhat removed from the source of the pollution, as consumers, proprietors and employees we are the ultimate beneficiaries. As such, climate change has everything to do with us.

To continue in our dirty-energy fueled lifestyles is therefore collusion in this environmental degradation. It is to benefit from a process that imposes suffering on the world's poor. It is to ignore God's clear mandate for creation. It is to continue in sin while ignoring the new life we have in God's Kingdom and our responsibility to work towards the Kingdom goal of creation renewal and healing.

Conclusion

As God's people, we are called to live the values of God's Kingdom here and now. This involves loving our neighbours, demonstrating justice for the poor, and working for the renewal and healing of creation. Climate change represents degradation of creation, indifference to the creator and his work of redemption and a gross injustice against both the current poor in the world as well as future generations. Fairly sharing access to natural resources, not only among the current generation but across future generations, is a clear application of God's principles of justice.

However, those of us in the affluent West have actually participated in this exploitation of God's creation to serve our own increased consumption. Climate change is therefore our responsibility and slowing and reversing it is part of our God given mission. We cannot continue to ignore it; we cannot leave it to governments and scientists to debate. Our biblical mandate for mission and justice as well as our complicity in causing the problem place climate change near the top of our agenda.

What has climate change got to do with us? It is our problem and as Christians, we are called to be the solution. We must examine our own contributions to it as well as taking up advocacy on behalf of those most affected, but with the least voice.

Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17

*[1] Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," **Science** 155 (1967): 1203-1207.*
*[2] James Watt, "Ours is the Earth," **Saturday Evening Post**, January/February 1982, 74-75.*
[3] Francis Shaeffer, Pollution and the Death of Man, in The Complete Works of Francis Shaeffer, vol 5. Paternoster Press, Cumbria UK, 1982, p36.
[4] F.F. Bruce, Romans, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Inter-varsity Press, Leicester, UK, 1985, p161.
[5] Ibid. p40.
*[6] George Browning, "Can the Tree of Life Survive Climate Change", **St Mark's Review** 2006 [2].*
[7] http://www.undp.org/energy/climate.htm
[8] http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/climatechange/keysheetsindex.asp
[9] ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE Working Party on Global and Structural Policies Working Party on Development Co-operation and Environment, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/55/21055658.pdf.

The Sabbath – a love feast:
The forerunner of Communion

Dovid ben Avraham

Historically, the life of Jews was very hard for so very long, that the Sabbath (Shabbat, Shabbos) became a weekly respite from servitude and hard work. In Judaism it is also referred to as "the Queen of the week", "the Bride," and, in however bitter a time and place, the Sabbath was the miraculous time when even the lowliest, poorest and least-consequential of people could feel in communion with the Almighty, favoured by God's special concern: "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel" (Exodus 31:17).

To "make Shabbos" means to be festive, to celebrate God's love for us and our love for Him. The Sabbath evening and meal conjures

up very special memories for me. It is a time of family warmth, hospitality, good food, discussions about God, arguments, and love for each other. And so, for Sabbath, down the centuries, in every country, Jews have scrubbed every corner of their dwellings, bathed themselves with utmost care, donned fresh garments, laid out (however poor) their best linens, glasses and utensils. The Sabbath brought, each week, throughout a lifetime, a sense of personal splendour, cleanliness, devotion and exaltation. It is that special time when the Shekinah, or Divine Presence, descends each Friday when the sun sets. We Jews believe that the Irish and the Italian boys had Christmas once a year; we had exaltation every Friday.

The Sabbath begins just before sunset on Friday. The father often returns home from the evening prayer at the synagogue. The wife and mother dresses in her very best, lights the Shabbos candles and offers a benediction. As she lights the candles, she closes her eyes and passes her palms over the candles, always toward herself ("the soul is the Lord's candle" it is said in the Talmud), and whispers, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us by Thy commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light." Then silently she asks God to preserve her family: its health, its peace, its honour.

Two braided loaves of bread (challahs) are placed at the head of the festive table, covered by an embroidered cloth. A goblet of wine stands next to the challah; this is the "Kiddush (prayer) cup", with the wine that will sanctify the Sabbath service.

The Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of God's name) implies the willingness to be martyred for faith in God and to prevent profanation or desecration of God's name. The father blesses his children, recites the Kiddush and sips the wine. The entire family then joins in welcoming the Sabbath angels. Husbands then sing a tribute to their wives in the words of Proverbs 31.

It is a long – honoured custom to invite a stranger, a traveller, a student, a poor person and lonely people to the Shabbos meal. However poor a Jew might be, he will seek somebody to be his family's oyrekh (a guest for the Sabbath). Great emphasis was placed on this hospitality – somebody on their own was just too sad to contemplate or permit.

The Kiddush ceremony predates the Christian Communion and Eucharist. The first Christians were Jews and adopted the concept of communion (or the love feast) that was used among the group of Jews called the Essenes. Yeshua (Jesus) would have been familiar with the custom and followed an adaptation of the Sabbath ceremony during the Passover meal in the upper room with his disciples before his betrayal.

The meal includes gefilte fish, soup with noodles of matzo-ball dumplings, and chicken. Horseradish invariably accompanies the gefilte fish, and "tsimes" the meat. My mother always served chopped liver, celery, radishes, olives, then gefilte fish, then kneydl (dumpling) soup, then the chicken – and apple sauce for either a side dish or dessert. On Saturday, the traditional lunch (prepared the day before) was cholent (a bean stew) and kugel (noodle or bread pudding).

The rest of the evening and the following day is usually spent praying and discussing God and His commandments and a holy way of life. These discussions are usually extremely lively and animated, but in good spirit. After all, where there are two Jews there are likely to be three opinions! The idea of an entire people, young and old, spending one day a week, year after year, generation after generation, century after century, in a seminar on religion, morals, ethics and responsibility simply boggles the mind. One of the ancient Jewish sages once said: "More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews."

As a Jew who has accepted Yeshua as the Messiah, I wonder if there would be any merit in the modern church adapting or adopting some of the practices of the above description in breaking bread together and sharing the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus.

(Dovid describes himself as "a convicted murderer serving a life sentence, a Jew who has accepted Yeshua as the Messiah, and someone who thanks God for allowing him to go to jail in order to become a servant").

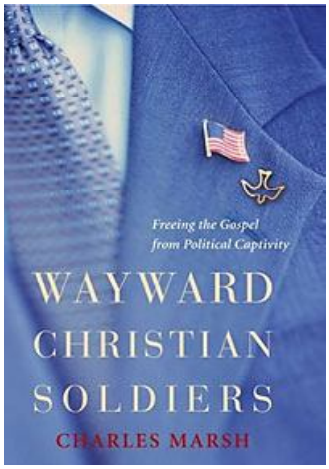
[For more on the Sabbath see "Sabbath and Jubilee: A Spirituality for the 21st Century" in ON THE ROAD #7 http://aaanz.mennonite.net/:/Newsletters/Newsletters%202000/OntheRoad7.pdf .]

BOOKS

Wayward Christian Soldiers

Freeing the Gospel from Political Captivity

Charles Marsh, Oxford University Press, 2007



In this timely book, evangelical theologian Charles Marsh offers a devastating critique of the political captivity and theological conceit that characterises contemporary American evangelicalism. He underscores the awful price the evangelical church has paid in terms of its distinctive Christian witness in order to gain political influence and curry partisan favour in the public square.

Once upon a time evangelicals considered themselves to be a "peculiar people". They wore their marginal status in mainstream culture almost as a badge of biblical faithfulness. They understood their primary calling to be the proclamation of the gospel. They were, first and foremost, "reporters of astonishing events, guardians of precious and confounding words" (5). How things have changed! Now they stalk the halls of power and consider it their sacred duty to champion "Christian values" and uphold "Christian principles," and to defend the interests of America as a "Christian nation."

Marsh attributes this conspicuous shift in self-understanding, interestingly, to the influence of Francis Schaeffer. "The religious elites and opinion makers who brought George W. Bush to the White House often speak of Francis Schaeffer as a major catalyst of their success" (21-22). In his 1981 ***Christian Manifesto***, Schaeffer issued a clarion call for evangelicals to prepare themselves, intellectually and institutionally, for the coming culture wars against secular humanists. His call was heeded. Over the past generation, Jesus freaks have become the new political elites, forging an alliance with right wing politics in defence of the moral foundations of Western civilization. Sadly Schaeffer's increasingly paranoid view of things eclipsed the more christocentric and globally-attuned perspective of that other great evangelical leader of the time, John R. W. Stott.

It is over the past decade that the political triumph (or is it defeat?) of American evangelicalism has come to full flower. "I am certain", Marsh writes, "that the story of American evangelicalism in the first decade of the twenty-first century will be studied by future generations of students and scholars as one of the most vivid examples of the church's cultural captivity in its two-thousand-year history…[E]vangelicals have gained much influence in the past decade as a result of their loyalty to conservative politics. But we have achieved access and power at the expense of the integrity of our witness" (76).

Although not discussed in much detail (despite the title of the book), it is the evangelical community's huge support for the invasion of Iraq that Marsh sees as the most eloquent testimony to its political capture. According to one poll in April 2003, a staggering 87% of white evangelical Christians in the US supported the pre-emptive strike, despite the fact that virtually every other major Christian denomination around the world, and almost every non-evangelical Christian leader in the America, condemned it as illegal and immoral. This complete indifference on the part of US evangelical leaders to the views of the global church is not simply an example of American isolationism; it is a singular failure to understand the transnational character of the Christian church and of the primary loyalty Christians owe to one another under the lordship of Christ.

The book is packed full of perceptive insights. In chapter three Marsh discusses the personal faith of George W. Bush, whom he identifies as a "serial converter" given the many conversion stories he tells. Marsh argues that Bush is not, and does not consider himself to be, an evangelical. He is much more comfortable with "the default language of American civil religion, baby-boomer syncretism, and sporadic church attendance…than with developing a worldview shaped by the Christian gospel"

(70). He concludes that "the president's piety is less indebted to Protestant evangelicalism that to certain forms of religious mysticism existing on the periphery of Christian orthodoxy" (72).

In chapter five, Marsh astutely proposes that the Religious Right's noisy talk of Christian values and Christian principles has its theological roots, not in evangelicalism, but in 19th century Liberal Protestantism, which had an overriding concern to accommodate the gospel to secular concerns. In chapter nine, Marsh points to yet another irony. While railing against the moral and epistemological relativism of post-modernism, evangelicals have gleefully applauded "the post-modern president". In the post-modern White House, truth recedes behind image and spin. War is deconstructed, and the torture chambers, the forgotten populations of New Orleans and the neglect of the environment are concealed behind "webs of duplicity and deception" (197)

Marsh calls for a return to biblical faithfulness by American evangelicals. This will require many things. There should be a moratorium on the "haughty and promiscuous use of the language of faith" in the public square (79). In fact Christians should consider voting in the next election for the candidate who speaks *least* about God (67).

Evangelicals need to recover the discipline of "holy silence". Silence does not mean a withdrawal from public life but rather an attentive refocusing on faith's essential affirmations and responsibilities, including the church's "preferential option for non-violence" (168).

Evangelicals also need to rediscover the indispensable role of theological reflection. Theology matters because it brings discipline and accountability to religious-talk. "At its best, theology has a way of slowing down language, interrupting easy formulas, unsettling partisan confidences, and disciplining thought. Can anyone doubt that the churches in the United States could use a little more theology and a lot less religious talk?" (98f). Also needed is a reaffirmation by American Christians of their membership of a multi-national, multi-cultural global church in place of their obsequious devotion to American political supremacy.

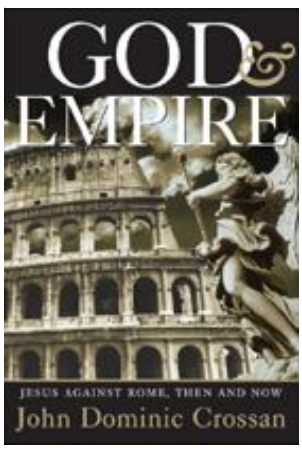
All this boils down to becoming once again a peculiar people. Marsh believes that the only viable traditions of dissent still operative in American Christian culture are those of the historic peace churches (Mennonites, Quakers, Church of the Brethren) on the one hand, and of Catholic social teaching on the other. Perhaps it is to these traditions then that evangelicalism must now look for fresh guidance at this critical time.

Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Victoria University, Wellington

God and Empire

Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now

John Dominic Crossan, HarperCollins, 2007



A topic of growing interest to New Testament scholarship is the extent to which Jesus or Paul, or other New Testament authors, consciously articulate in their teaching and practice anti-Roman or counter-imperial sentiments and ideas. In the past scholars simply assumed that the early Jesus-movement was either indifferent to the political realities of its day, or that it adopted a basically positive attitude towards the Roman imperial order. In effect Christian commentators saw their own indifference to politics or their own social conservatism reflected in the pages of the New Testament. It was also commonplace for them to heap praise on the Pax Romana for its political stability and remarkable engineering accomplishments, since these were the things that permitted the rapid spread of the Christian gospel. It was almost as though God had employed Roman military might simply as a means of preparing the world for the advent of the church.

How things have changed! The apolitical Jesus, against whom John Howard Yoder railed so vigorously, has now been consigned to the scrap heap of historical implausibility. And the politically conservative or pro-Roman Jesus is following rapidly in his footsteps. Even the pro-Roman Paul, so long considered *de rigueur* on

the basis of Romans 13:1-7, is going distinctly out of fashion. With growing confidence, biblical scholars from across the theological spectrum are detecting politically subversive themes and ideas – some subtle, some not so subtle – embedded in a wide range of New Testament texts.

One such scholar is John Dominic Crossan, founding member of the Jesus Seminar and frequent sparring partner with N.T. Wright. Both these scholars agree on the counter-imperial thrust of the messages of Jesus and Paul. But Crossan goes a step further. He rightly insists that the crucial point of difference between Christ and Rome was the issue of *violence*, which he describes as Rome's "drug of choice". Like all great civilizations before it and since it, Rome believed that lasting peace could only ever be achieved through violent conquest and victory, the enforced pacification of land and sea. Jesus and Paul, by contrast, insisted that true peace is the product of justice not conquest, and that real justice can only be achieved by non-violent means.

Undergirding this belief was their understanding of God as a non-violent deity. This conception of God, however, is never fully or finally triumphant in the pages of the Bible. What Crossan terms "the ambiguity of divine power" – the fact that God's activity is portrayed both as radically non-violent and as horribly, brutally violent – pervades both testaments. These are irreconcilable views of God and ultimately, Crossan insists, we must choose between them. For him the historical Jesus incarnates divine non-violence, and Paul (or at least the Paul of the undisputed letters) bears witness to the same reality. The gospel writers however, especially Matthew, and several other New Testament authors, such as those who penned the pseudo-Pauline letters, sometimes relapse into what Crossan terms "the normalcy of civilization's violence".

No one is more vilely guilty of this than John of the Apocalypse. Crossan is unrelenting in his condemnation of this document. In his opinion, "the Book of Revelation is the Christian Bible's last and thus far most successful attempt to subsume the radicality of God's non-violence into the normalcy of civilization's violence (230). Its transformation of the slaughtered Jesus of the First Coming into the slaughtering Christ of the Second Coming is nothing less than a libelling of the body of Christ, a blasphemy against the soul of Christ, a crime against divinity, and a sin against the Holy Spirit. As Christians we must choose between the incarnate Christ, who is non-violent, and the apocalyptic Christ, who is a genocidal tyrant; we cannot have them both.

Crossan writes brilliantly. His prose is always clear, often witty, occasionally passionate (especially when attacking American Christian fundamentalism), and surprisingly chatty. The book reads more like a transcript of an oral lecture, full of autobiographical asides, delivered to a general audience than a carefully reasoned academic analysis addressed to his peers. His great learning is not in question, but it is several stages removed from the final text. Hence Crossan appears to rely more on dogmatic assertion than demonstration, and rarely, if ever, engages with alternative ways of reading the evidence. Most notable by its absence is any discussion of his hermeneutical methodology. As elsewhere his work, it is hard to avoid the feeling that Crossan brings a pre-cut image of Jesus (and of Paul) to the New Testament documents, confidently deeming those bits that fit the template to be authentic and theologically normative, and those that don't to be later distortion.

Another problem with Crossan's approach that nags is the truth-status of his theological language. He speaks freely about God, incarnation, resurrection, even Jesus' *bodily* resurrection, as though these are objective realities he believes in. In fact, I suspect, he understands them to be essentially symbolic or metaphorical terms. The only place he comes clean on this is when discussing the Second Advent. "The Second Coming of Christ is not an event we should understand literally. The Second Coming of Christ is what will happen when we Christians finally accept that the First Coming was the Only Coming and start to cooperate with its divine presence" (231).

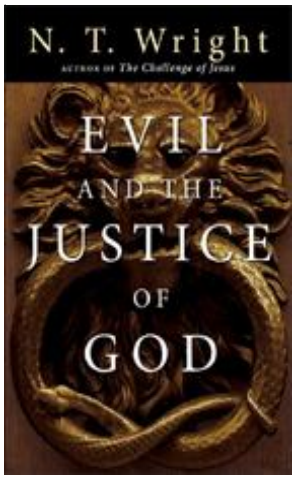
For all that, I am in agreement with Crossan's basic proposal – that Jesus' understanding of God and of God's kingdom is intrinsically non-violent, and that this stands in diametrical opposition to the violence of Roman imperial theology, and all other imperial theology

for that matter, including that of the Pax Americana. I also agree that believers are summoned to work with God for the greater realisation of non-violent justice on earth; Crossan's concept of "collaborative eschatology" is right on the button. Where I part company with him is that I suspect the New Testament writers are all far more faithful to this vision of non-violent justice than Crossan allows. I think we need a more sophisticated and nuanced assessment of the violent language and imagery that still peppers their work than is afforded by Crossan's simplistic division of the data into two categories – texts we should accept, and those we must reject because they fail to pass moral muster. I want to arrive at the same destination as Crossan, but to get there by less cavalier means.

-Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Victoria University, Wellington

Evil and the Justice of God

N. T. Wright, SPCK, 2006



Tom Wright is Bishop of Durham, and one of the world's most interesting and creative biblical scholars. I have read a good deal of his prodigious output and, while familiar themes recur, I always learn something new from each book. Wright once told me that he has never preached the same sermon twice (what a waste, I thought!). But this too is a mark of the man's creativity and brilliance – a mind so sharp and so searching that he has no sooner said something than he is on to the next matter. Brilliant he may be, but happily, he communicates with astonishing clarity, with constant good humour, and with an unbending self-confidence that he has something fresh and important to say.

In this little book, Wright tackles what he considers to be "the big question of our time" – how to understand, live with, and respond to the reality of evil. In one sense the problem of evil is as old as humanity itself. In another sense, Wright proposes, we face today a "new problem of evil". It is new because in face of terrorism and tsunamis, torture and genocide, traditional ways of discussing evil seem much too abstract, and much too trivial. Since the Enlightenment, the controlling assumption has been that evil will be swept away by the relentless march of human progress. Post-modernity has deconstructed this dangerous ideology of progress and underscored the full seriousness of evil. But it offers no hope of redemption; post-modern analysis is, Wright insists, ultimately nihilistic.

It is the Jewish and Christians scriptures, Wright believes, that afford us most insight into the character of evil. Not that they offer an explanation for the *origin* of evil; nor do they even supply a fully-fledged *theodicy* (a defence of God's justice in face of empirical evil). Instead the Bible documents how pervasive the problem of evil is and, more importantly, narrates a "big story" that tells of what God has done to remedy the problem. This story reaches its climax in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. On the one hand, evil reaches its zenith as the political, religious and spiritual powers conspire to engineer his destruction. On the other hand, Jesus chooses to take upon himself, as Israel's (and thus humanity's) representative, the full consequences of evil, and in so doing exhausts its power. His resurrection signals the defeat of evil and the liberation of material creation from its life-denying grip.

Wright next turns to the question of what all this means in practice. The church is called, he suggests, both to implement Christ's victory and to anticipate what a world finally purged of evil might look like. In the final chapter, Wright offers a moving explanation for how it is the reality of forgiveness, both divine and human, that ultimately severs the power and logic of evil.

This is a short book, and, as always, Wright paints a very large picture, with very bold brush strokes. This means he does not deal thoroughly with all the complex questions the phenomenon of evil throws up. But what he does do, quite persuasively, is to show how the biblical story looks evil squarely in the eye and offers an account, unique in human literature, of its defeat and eventual demise.

Reviewed by Chris Marshall, Victoria University, Wellington

Why Manners Matter

The Case for Civilized Behaviour in a Barbarous World

Lucinda Holdforth, Random House, 2007

"Manners maketh the man," said William of Wykeham, and American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson reflected, "Good manners are made up of petty sacrifices." But few aphorisms are less likely to appeal to the modern mind, says Lucinda Holdforth in her book, ***Why Manners Matter: The Case for Civilized Behaviour in a Barbarous World***.

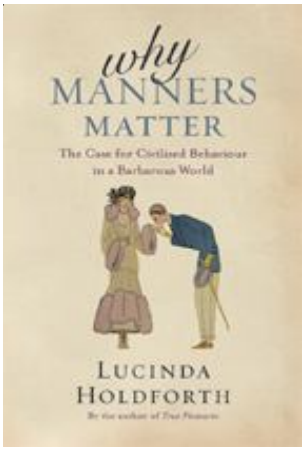
Why, then, write a book on manners? Holdforth, a Sydney-based speechwriter, is convinced that civility protects human rights and freedoms, saves us from over-legislation, strengthens community, and "adorns our individual humanity." In short, manners are essential to civilization.

This is not a book that pines after 19th-century sensibilities nor a manual on etiquette. It is a perceptive commentary on how we live, a conversation on ideas, and a plea for neighbourly respect and common sense. The author argues that personal civility matters because (to grab a few of her key ideas):

- we are social animals who must cooperate to survive;

-manners are more important than laws, less invasive than morals, and better than social confusion;

- manners nurture equality, modify self-esteem, and express our civic values;



- sovereignty demands self-sovereignty;

- manners resolve the tension between order and freedom, liberty and stability;

- manners express authenticity, goodness and progress in human community;

- corporations are not civilizing institutions; and

- manners give us dignity, improve communication, prevent premature intimacy, reveal our humanity, and render life beautiful.

By our modest mannerly contributions, our little "petty sacrifices," we combine to make something bigger and ultimately more significant – a civil society. And a civil society is an excellent environment in which Christians and Christian values may flourish.

Why Manners Matter is witty and timely, profound and practical, forceful and charming. As the publisher's blurb notes, it "will ensure you never take courtesy for granted again." I respectfully suggest you go out and get two copies: one for yourself and the other for someone you know who disdains manners – or who lives among people who do.

- Reviewed by Rev Rod Benson who is Director of the Centre for Christian Ethics at Morling College, Sydney.

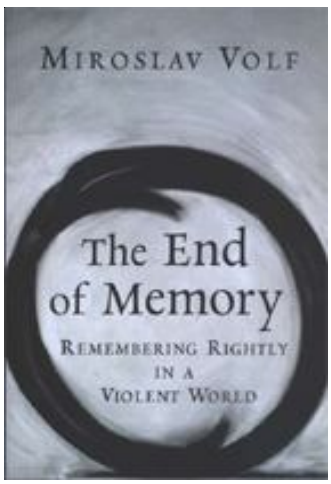
You can respond to this column and read previous columns at:
http://speaking-ethically.blogspot.com/

The End of Memory

Remembering Rightly in a Violent World

Miroslav Volf, Eerdmans, 2006

Starting with the SIEV X



A recent visit to the SIEV X memorial on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra set me thinking about the issues of remembering and forgiveness and provided a useful starting point for looking at Miroslav Volf's recent challenging work ***The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World***.

The memorial to the three hundred people who died in the sinking of the SIEV X, a grossly overloaded boat of refugees in 2001, was erected in Weston Park in Canberra. The memorial is located on a long finger of parkland fringed by Lake Burley Griffin. Each person who died when the SIEV X went down in the Indian Ocean is represented by a pole with artwork, a label of the name of the person, where known (the Australian Federal Police have still not released the names of some of the victims because of ongoing inquiries), and the name of the group who provided the artwork.

To walk along the line of the poles up the hill from the lake's edge, reading the names on the memorial and responding to the artwork on each pole was a profoundly moving experience. I was reduced to tears. The background of tall gums, the cheerful call of crimson rosellas and the imposing presence of Black Mountain provided a reflective and respectful setting to remember the deaths of these asylum seekers. Leaving aside the question as to whether political considerations made the difference between living or dying for the people on this boat (noting that the event took place in the run up to a Federal election in 2001 that gave us the Tampa and the 'children overboard' affair), something happened for me as I walked from pole to pole. I was struck by the reality of each pole as an acknowledgement by Australians of shared humanity and a willingness to join in the act of grieving and of giving these people the dignity of being remembered. All of this done through the works of art that were carefully and lovingly prepared by children in schools, students in university colleges, by church communities and community groups families and neighbourhoods across the country.

We live in a world of abstractions where we struggle with democracy, "Australian" values, and those things we are to fear such as terrorism and 'boat people." Given the overwhelming large numbers of people suffering from poverty, terror and violence, whether at the hands of non-state actors, or states, those officially authorised to kill, there was here a moment of naming and acknowledging the reality of individual human beings as the subject of these policies. Who bears the responsibility for these deaths is a moot point. The greed of the people smugglers sending so many to sea in an unsafe boat or the Australian Government's willingness to discourage those seeking to claim asylum for the purpose of its own electoral advantage is hard to say.

The quality of attention paid by the people who prepared these poles was astonishing in the diversity of style and the care paid to the paintings and mosaics. One pole in particular caught the attention of both my wife and me. Included in the painting was the following proverb: "How do we know when it is dawn? When we have enough light to recognize in the face of a stranger ... that of our sister." Indeed. That proverb seems an appropriate summary of what the memorial was all about. Those who designed this memorial and those who painted the poles had enough light to recognise, in a time of public and political darkness and moral confusion, that in the face of these strangers there were the faces of our brothers and sisters and to remember their life and death.

The memorial brought into focus for me the moral and political significance that attaches to the issue of memory at a communal level. For me the remembering involved acknowledging the depth of my anger at the policies of the Australian government that had led to the demonisation of refugees and the unwillingness of the government to exercise hospitality. The memorial opened up my own memories and faced me with my own anger at those who had designed and justified the policies that in were implicated in the tragedy of the SIEV X and the locking up in detention of many others.

A personal journey

Volf's topic in ***The End of Memory*** is *...the memory of wrongdoing suffered by a person who desires neither to hate nor to disregard but to love the wrongdoer. … to embrace the heart of the Christian faith is precisely to be pulled beyond the zone of comfort into the risky territory marked by the commitment to love one's neighbour* (p.9)

Volf's book starts with reflection on his own personal experience of interrogation in 1984 as a conscript in the Yugoslav army. This experience that has profoundly engaged him, sets the backdrop to his search for theological resources for the talks of making memories a source of healing. Significant elements of this book were delivered as the annual Henry Stob Lectures at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids. The book is tightly argued and does not make for easy reading.

After recounting his own experience of interrogation as a conscript in the Yugoslav army under communist rule, (though Volf returns at numerous points in the book to test the position he is developing against the benchmark of this experience) he engages with the larger ongoing conversation amongst historians, psychologists and public intellectuals. This conversation is about the importance of memory and the

possibility of forgiveness sparked by the catastrophes of the twentieth century. This roll call includes two world wars, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge and Rwanda, not to mention purges in China and the USSR.

Volf's argument is not about whether we should remember a wrongdoing but around the issue of how we are to remember it rightly. For a Christian this is a question as to how we should remember such wrongdoing as a person committed to loving the wrongdoer and overcoming evil with good. Memory, as Volf continually reminds us, can direct us to look either in the direction of virtues and peace or in the direction of vice and war. Memory, he is very clear, is dangerous. And it is his awareness of this danger at both the personal level and at a broader political level that leads to the careful, painstaking and intricate argument that he develops.

What does it take to remember for good, to remember in salutary rather than destructive ways? How can we help memory become a bridge between adversaries instead of a deep and dark ravine that separates them? How can former enemies remember together so as to reconcile and how can they reconcile so as to remember together? (p.35)

The benchmarks of truthfulness and justice are never far away from Volf's argument. Does remembering serve justice? Can we remember truthfully? Those who are confident of our ability to answer those questions with an instant, unconditional yes will find Volf an uncomfortable conversation partner as he works his way through these issues.

… truthfulness constitutes a just use of memories and it constrains their misuse. Truthfulness is also an important element of inner healing – of learning how to live with the past without its wounds being kept open by the blade of memory, (p.71)

To summarise an argument as closely wrought as that which Volf traces out in these lectures is difficult. The only way I can manage this within the scope of a relatively brief review is to quote Volf's own summaries of his argument at key turning points in the book.

As he comes to the end of the first section of the book Volf asks: *...is there not a tension, perhaps even contradiction between the struggle to remember rightly now … and the promise of non- remembrance then… Only if we fail to recognize the difference between this world and the next, and disregard the fact that a journey from here to there must be undertaken. As to the difference in the here and now justice is hardly ever attained and threats persist; hence we remember wrongs suffered. In a world to come justice will have been done and threats will no longer present themselves, therefore we will be able to let go of memories of wrongs suffered.* (Pp.150-151)

What of this journey of which he speaks, that is the key point of qualification in his argument for arriving at a moment of non-remembrance?

…it follows the path that starts with remembering truthfully, condemning wrong deeds, healing inner wounds, releasing wrongdoers from punishment and guilt, repentance by and transformation of wrongdoers and reconciliation between the wronged and their wrongdoers and it ends with the letting go of memory of wrongdoing. We take this journey partially and provisionally here and now when we forgive and reconcile - and on rare occasions release the memory of wrong suffered. We undertake it once again, definitively and finally, at the threshold of the world to come. (p.151)

The third section of the book sees Volf engage with the thought of Freud, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard drawing from them to defend the importance of forgetting and the strong tie between love and the non-remembrance of offenses.

In closing he defends himself from the accusation that non-remembrance of wrongs suffered is a flight from unbearable memory into the happiness of oblivion.

According to my conception each wrong suffered will be exposed in its full horror, its perpetrators condemned and the repentant transformed, and its victims honored and healed. Then after evil has been both condemned and overcome, we will be able to release the memories of wrongs suffered, able to let them slip out of our mind. … we will not "forget" so as to be able to rejoice; we will rejoice and therefore let those memories slip out of our minds! The reason for our non-remembrance of wrongs will

be the same as its cause: Our minds will be rapt in the goodness of God and in the goodness of God's new world, and the memories of wrongs will wither away like plants without water. (p.214)

Without attempting to critically engage the substance of Volf's argument, it is worth noting that Volf's argument has been respectfully challenged by Stanley Hauerwas in Chapter 9 of his collection of essays ***A Better Hope: Resources for a Church confronting Capitalism, Democracy and Postmodernity***. The chapter is entitled "Why Time cannot and should not Heal the wounds of History, but Time has been and can be redeemed". This critical essay was written well before the publication of this book but engages with a trajectory of Volf's thought in a way that is still relevant to any consideration of ***The End of Memory***.

Hauerwas in responding to Volf's earlier discussion of this issue argues that *…God makes possible all the time in the world to make our time, our memories redeemed. Our time can be redeemed because time has been redeemed by Christ. That is why we do not need to deny our memories shaped as they are by sin, but why we can trust memories to be transformed by forgiveness and reconciliation.* (p.150-1)

The process of forgiveness, according to Hauerwas, is part of the formation of a new community, the church, a gift that calls us into communion. Hauerwas in a sentence that takes more unpacking than I can do in this review states: *The possibility of reconciled memory between peoples who have been wronged by one another is but another name for the church. To be such a church takes time and in the taking becomes time in God's very life.* (p.153)

Hauerwas is making an argument about the healing of memories through our finding our place in the communal identity of the church. Volf's argument focuses much more on tracing out the experience of healing and forgiveness in the life of the individual. It is at this point that I find my visit to the SIEV X memorial relevant. On that Sunday morning, I came to an awareness of a remembering that did not gloss over the reality of what happened but suggested the possibility of truthfulness as a step towards justice for those who died and their families. Thus far, I am with Volf. The wounds of history are deep and not easily healed. That time can be redeemed through our struggles at a communal level is a hope that requires patience. The reality of communities that took time for the gestures of remembering that resulted in the creation of the memorial suggests that Hauerwas is also onto something important. Let the conversation continue.

Reviewed by Doug Hynd, Canberra

The Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc.

The purposes of the Association are:

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

What is Anabaptism?

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

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

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